

FROM HELL TO HEAVEN

Mira Publications by Dada J P Vaswani

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Dada J. P Vaswani

FROM HELL TO HEAVEN

(Fourth Edition)

By
J. P. Vaswani

With a Foreword by
Dr. P. B. Gajendragadkar,
Former Chief Justice of India

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The present volume is a collection of articles which appeared originally in the monthly magazine, *Mira*. It is being published on the gifted author's 54th birthday (2-8-72)

Sri J P Vaswani's writings are a tonic. They are a balm to soothe the mind. He has a charming and lyrical style. His language is simple and lucid.

His earlier publications including *Pictures and Parables*, *Whispers* and *Tear-Drops* have touched many hearts. The contents of the present volume are radiant with practical suggestions to face life in a heroic spirit.

In this book the inspired author gives us a simple prescription to heal the diseased and hellish mind, and to regain the God-given gift of healthy and heavenly heart. According to the learned author, "You are your own prison." Man has created a hell for himself by his wrong thinking. Therefore man is unhappy. Man's sadness is the result of his inner attitudes towards outer happenings. Man must change his thinking if man has to regain "the lost paradise." The pages that follow will enlighten you, uplift you and inspire you.

We are deeply grateful to our honoured friend, Dr P B Gajendragadkar, Chairman, Law Commission, Govt of India, New Delhi, for his luminous "Foreword" which adorns the pages of this volume.

FOREWORD

I have great pleasure in writing this very short 'Foreword' to the inspiring articles written by Brother J'P. Vaswani the title *From Hell to Heaven*, because it gives me an opportunity to pay my tribute, and offer my greetings, to Brother J P on the auspicious occasion of his 54th birthday

I have had the pleasure of meeting Brother J P only twice, but the impression which his personality made on my mind is as fresh as ever Luminous eyes, soft voice, eloquent speech, mind full of noble thoughts, life dedicated to the service of humanity, Brother J P's spirit of inquiry and humility of approach is writ large in every one of his movement and words Brother J P is a true disciple of revered Dadaji To hear his speeches, is the best form of spiritual education "His words come out from the depth of his heart and eloquently convey the message which revered Dadaji gave throughout his blessed life May the Torch entrusted by Dadaji in Brother J P's worthy hands ever continue to burn effulgent and guide all earnest seekers after spiritual peace and salvation through the service of society'

Brother J P has now become an institution He is the shining and inspiring example of his philosophy "Onward! Forward! Godward!" His life is a bright candle whose flame shines with the brilliance of Dadaji's teachings, it is a singing bird and the song sung is always the spiritually

elevating message of Dadaji. It is a sweet flute which sings the music of Dadaji's message, a bright flower with the fragrance of Dadaji's blessed thoughts; all in all, Brother J P's life shines like a lamp which gives light and guidance to all those who come in touch with him.

May the blessings of Dadaji and the prayerful best wishes of his innumerable friends and admirers give evergrowing strength to Brother J P. to carry on the spiritual and cultural work which Dadaji has handed over to him!

मनः एव मनुष्याणाम् कारणम् बन्धमोक्षयोः says the Bhagavat Gita, our mind is the cause of our bondage or of our liberation. How do we learn to train and discipline our mind so that it serves as an instrument of our liberation and not of our bondage? All those who read Brother J P's thoughts, so lucidly expressed in *From Hell to Heaven*, will easily find an answer for themselves.

New Delhi

P. B. Gajendragadkar

27-7-72

FROM HELL TO HEAVEN

[1]

A young man, due to circumstances which he felt were beyond his control, found himself in a sorry plight. He was a graduate of an Indian University but, do what he will, he lost job after job, which he secured not without much seeking and strenuous effort. He found it difficult to procure food for his famished wife and children. On top of it, he was afflicted with what the doctors called an "incurable disease". He felt like one shipwrecked, and, not unoften, he wished for death to come and grant him release from the agonies of an unhappy existence.

One day, as he wandered aimlessly through the streets of his town, like a dead leaf borne on the autumn wind, he happened to pass by a House of Worship. Floating on the breeze there came to him the words of a song—

Arise! Awake! O child of God!
Thou art not a weakling!
Thou art the master of thy destiny!
Renounce depression,
And behold!
The very planets are eager to serve thee!

He paused for a while to listen to the song. Was it being sung for him? Word after word sank deep into his heart. Irresistibly, he felt drawn to the open door. He entered the big hall and took his seat in a corner. Soon the

song came to a close it was followed by *kirtan*,—brothers and sisters singing together in chorus a few simple words —

*O Friend of the friendless and forlorn!
O Lord of the lowly and lost!
I cast my cares at Thy Lotus-feet!
I seek refuge in Thee!*

The lines were sung, again and again, in religious fervour Our friend joined in the singing As the pitch of the song rose, he forgot himself,—his worries and woes, his sorrows and sufferings,— and for the first time, in several years, knew what it was to feel relaxed and happy

Evening after evening, he came to join in the worship and the *kirtan* It gave a new tone to his life Gradually, his life underwent a transformation The pattern of his mind was changed his thoughts became positive, vital His health improved He became a new man And, today, this young man, — no longer young in years, for he is over fifty,—is at the head of a big commercial firm with God as his "senior partner" More than half of the profits,— they run into six figures,— he sets apart for the service of God and his suffering creation

[2]

We are, most of us, victims to the machinations of our mind The mind sits over us as a tyrant and we readily consent to be its slaves He is truly happy who has broken the thralldom of the mind,— truly happy, because he is truly free The mind of such an one becomes his friend, a co-partner in the constructive, creative tasks of life In the case of so many of us, alas! the mind is our deadly foe Held fast in its grip, we feel so miserable And we feel utterly helpless

The other day, a grown-up sister came to me and said — "I am tormented by jealousy. And I can bear it no longer I want to end my life " As she spoke, her pretty face became

dark as night

I said to her— "Sister! you cannot end your life For life goes on even after the body drops down And your hell you will carry with yourself, even if you kill the body So, why not face the issue now? Why not make an earnest effort to convert your hell into a heaven of peace and joy and bliss?"

"Is that possible?" she asked in sheer wonder
And I said to her — "With God nothing is impossible!"
"Tell me what I may do?" she implored

"All God asks of us is sincerity," was my answer "Relax yourself and radiate love and goodwill to her of whom you feel jealous Think of her as one of your best friends and pray that Divine Love may pour His choicest benedictions on her"

She relaxed her body And together the two of us prayed After some minutes of silence, she opened her eyes they were filled with peace and understanding

"My mind is now at peace," she said, "and I know that my happiness does not depend on anything outside me it is a product of my own inner attitude"

So many of our ills would be cured, if only we could change the pattern of our mind Change the mind, and you change the world The modern world has gone astray, because it lays undue emphasis on the "work" side of life Work has its place in life, but more important than "work" is "thought" Take care of your thoughts Every thought is a force which we generate for our good or evil

Some one may well remark, thoughts come to us from goodness knows where They overwhelm us, and we feel helpless Is it our fault that evil thoughts come to us, from time to time?

No, it is not our fault if evil thoughts come to us and tear into bits the fabric of good life which we may have gradually built. But it is our fault if we welcome evil thoughts and let them germinate in the soil of our mind. Out of them will grow trees of bitter fruit which we shall be compelled to swallow.

Behind every evil thought is an evil force. When we accept evil thoughts, we, as it were, attach ourselves to dark powers. We fall into their clutches, and before we know it, we create "hell" for ourselves.

If we think good thoughts,— thoughts of love and compassion, of beauty and joy, of faith and freedom, of peace and wisdom,— we invite to ourselves good forces, forces of light and, in that measure, we create "heaven" around ourselves.

"Heaven" and "hell" are of our own creation. By thinking "heavenly" thoughts, we get into touch with "heavenly" forces and we feel happy and we spread the sunshine of joy wherever we go. All we need to do is to correct our thinking. In this connection, the following may be noted —

1 Perhaps, the simplest and most efficacious method of correcting our thinking is that of *kirtan*. Whenever two or three gather together, let them sing in chorus the Name Divine, and in the Name lose themselves, drown themselves. This method is so simple that often its importance is overlooked. But it is one of immense value to us all.

Are our homes breaking? Is our community crumbling? Are nations at war with each other? The cure of these and other ills is *kirtan*. O ye pilgrims on the Path! get together and form *kirtan*- bands. You will sanctify your own lives, you will purify,— as did Sri Chaitanya centuries ago,— the atmosphere of your town and country. You will release forces for the healing of the human race.

2 As you wake up in the morning, breathe out an

aspiration of purity, of love, of joy, of peace, of humility, of trust,— any aspiration that may express your inmost need Repeat this aspiration as often as you can during the day, even in the midst of your work.

I know of a young man who, in the years of his adolescence, was troubled, again and again, by violent storms of passion He repeated the words — "May my heart be pure and clean and bright! May I be a child of Light!" He repeated this line,— which, to him, was sacred as a *mantra*,— many thousands of times a day As he repeated the words, he imagined God in the form of a Great Moon radiating to him cooling vibrations of purity He persisted in the practice for six months and the day came when he became pure as a pearl Today, he can safely walk through objects of lust with no feeling of lust but with purity in his eyes and love in his heart

3 As you retire at night, read a little from the life or teaching of a saint, a *bhakta*, a man of God This has a purifying influence on the mind and, consequently, on one's dream-consciousness I have found the following books specially helpful — *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas A Kempis *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* by "M", and Dadaji's (Sri T L Vaswanji's) *Gita Meditations* and *Little Flowers*

4 When evil thoughts come to you, do not struggle with them The more you struggle, the more you strengthen them The best way to face evil thoughts is to let them alone and to think divine thoughts Light dispels darkness Every good thought is as a ray of light which clears the dark clouds of evil thoughts

5 Keep yourself relaxed at all times,— both in body and mind So, work with unhesitating speed and speak gently, sweetly, in love and understanding Let nothing disturb your inner peace Imagine the world as an ocean in which stormy waves rise high, threatening to drown you Be still and full of trust in the Lord of the ocean The

waves will pass away In all difficulties and dangers, believe with the ancient seer who exclaimed — "All is well, a thousand times well, both now and a million years hence!"

[3]

So many, alas! spend their lives in a "hell" which they have themselves created It is within their power to convert "hell" into "heaven" But, it must not be forgotten that "heaven" is not the goal of life Beyond both "hell" and "heaven" must we pass to abide in the Eternal This "abiding" is the state of "contemplation" at which we arrive after the "self" is dead, the "ego" is annihilated It is the unitive life of love It is the life of him who exclaims with Rabia, one of the greatest mystics of humanity —

Beloved!

*If I come to Thee
That Thou mayst save me
From the fires of hell,
Let me burn in hell!*

*If I come to Thee
That Thou mayst grant me
The joys of Paradise,
Let the gates of Paradise
Be shut against me!*

*But if I come to Thee
For Thine own sake, Beloved!
Keep me not away from Thee
And so bless me
That I may abide
In unbroken communion
With Thy Eternal Beauty
For ever and evermore!*

LIFE IS A LOVE-STORY

[1]

Yesterday, someone broke into my room and took away, among other things, some silver articles from the little shrine. They were loving gifts I had received from kind friends. They were so elegant that I had not used them even once. In fact, I did not miss them when I entered the room after the "theft" had taken place. It was Shanti who discovered the loss and gave me a list of the missing articles. I whispered to myself the words which dear Dadaji had uttered on a similar occasion, several years ago — "He gave. He hath taken! Blessed be His Name!"

The news soon spread and friends started making enquiries. One of them said to me — "How sad to think that the thief should have despoiled the shrine!" Another exclaimed — "Even God could not look after the things entrusted to His care!"

I smiled and said — "Of what value are a few ounces of silver to Him who is the Lord not alone of the Earth but of all the worlds and suns and stars,— the Lord of the Universe! All our silver and gold, the treasures of kings and emperors,— what are they to Him? So many heaps of ashes and dust!"

And I recalled an incident in the life of the blessed one,— Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. His rich disciple, Mathura Babu, has a big, beautiful temple dedicated to Vishnu. The image of Vishnu is adorned with gold ornaments studded with precious stones. One dark night, some thieves break

into the shrine and escape with ornaments worth many thousands of rupees. The news comes to Mathura Babu as a shock and he falls into a swoon.

After some days, Mathura Babu visits the temple. Sri Ramakrishna is by him. Seeing the image shorn of its ornaments, Mathura Babu breaks into tears and sadly exclaims, "Lord! what a shame! You could not take care of the ornaments on your body! What may we expect of You?"

Immediately, Sri Ramakrishna corrects him, saying — "Shame on you, Mathura Babu! for using such improper words. The jewels that have been taken away may be precious to you, but to God they are no better than toys of clay,— lumps of yellow dust. The Goddess of wealth is His attendant. What can such an one ever lack? Should He spend wakeful nights because a thief has stolen your few rupees? What impudence! You should never say such things!"

[2]

What is it that God asks of us? Does He need gold ornaments and priceless jewels? Does He feel happy if we consecrate to Him an "air-conditioned" temple with the most up-to-date fittings and furniture? He rejoices when a few simple, childlike souls are gathered together in a quiet corner to sing His Name and offer Him the loving adoration of their aspiring hearts. Does not Tukaram say — "God dances when His *bhaktas* (devotees, lovers) sing"?

The *bhakta* approaches God in a loving, direct way. In his heart is the yearning of Majnu for Leila, of Shirin for Farhad, of Sasui for Punhu, of Heer for Ranjha,— the yearning, the pure passionate love of the lover for his long-lost beloved. The life of a *bhakta* is an unending love-story. Significant are the words of Sri Chaitanya —

*The woman love-lorn
Pines for her lover,—
And though engaged
In household duties,
Feels in her heart the thrill,
The delight of love!
Even so doth the bhakta
Abide in the blissful state of love,
While engaged in affairs of the world!*

The way of the *bhakta* is the "little way " He shuns the lime-light of the world he loves to dwell at the lotus-feet of the Lord He lives a hidden life of faith and devotion, of humility and love

"What is it that you desire?" was the question put to Narada And this great Teacher of *bhakti* answered - "Two things - (1) love for the Lotus-feet of the lord and (2) strength to resist the attacks of world- bewitching *maya* "

The *bhakta* has realised the vanity of all that the world is madly seeking,— possessions, power, honours, fame, earthly greatness All these are a delusion and a snare The *bhakta* desires to accomplish no great things He has no desire to be even a great preacher of the Word of God he has no desire to be a builder of great institutions Of St Theresa of Lisieux it is said that in her early years she aspired to devote her life to missionary activities, but as she grew in the love of God, she said — "I will hide myself in a cloister to give myself more fully to God "

The true *bhakta* ever aspires to be an humble servant of God and His suffering creation He has no ambition to grow to the stature of Godhood he but longs to be near the Beloved, birth after birth

Several years ago, a Swami came to meet dear Dadaji (Sri T L Vaswani) The Swami represented an august assembly of *sadhus* who had met together at Bombay on

the occasion of the opening ceremony of the "Sadhubela Ashram" He requested Dadaji to be present on the auspicious occasion

The Swami was with me for over half an hour He had a kindly face and sweet disposition In the course of his conversation, he asked me — "Who are you?"

"I am nothing!" I answered without hesitation

Suddenly, the colour of his countenance changed The pitch of his voice rose as he said - "Never say that! When you call yourself nothing, you but insult the divinity within you! You are everything! You are all! You are Brahman!"

I smiled I touched his feet in lowly reverence and said — "So bless me, Swamiji that I may be an humble servant of Him who is the All-in-one and the One-in-all,— and of His saints and *bhaktas*!"

[3]

There was a young man, whose father passed away leaving him wealth untold His heart was fired with the love of God He set out in search of a Guru who might lead him out of untruth into Truth, out of death into the Life Undying

He learnt of a teacher of spiritual wisdom The teacher had an *ashrama* and whoso joined it must first dedicate all his property and possessions to the *ashrama* Accordingly, the young man sold all he had and gave to the Guru who, in turn, passed on to him the secret which was supposed to make him emancipate, free!

What was the secret? The young man was asked to affirm, again and again — "*Aham Brahmasmi*!" "I am Brahman!" "I am God!" "I am the Supreme!" The young man did so with all the sincerity and faith of which he was capable "I am God!" "I am the Supreme!" he repeated to himself, again and again "*Aham Brahmasmi*!" "I am

God!" The words were uttered with every tick of the clock. What was the result? Far from being emancipated, free, the young man's condition grew more and more miserable. He felt distressed in mind, he felt unhappy. In due course, he fell ill. He could no longer stay at the *ashrama*. Penniless,— having given away all he had to the Guru,— he came out of the *ashrama* and, as good fortune would have it, came in contact with another teacher. He advised the young seeker to give up saying — "I am God!" and to affirm instead — "I am nothing!" This the young man did, and it was not long before he became sound in body, mind and spirit.

How many are there who have attained to that high spiritual stage where they can truthfully claim to be "God" or "sons of God?" When an ordinary man affirms he is God, he is becoming, firstly, insincere, hypocritical and, secondly, egoistic. A sufi dervish said — "The man who has attained Godhood does not affirm, 'I am God.' The man who affirms, 'I am God,' has not attained Godhood."

Mansur could raise the cry — "Anal Haq!" "I am Truth!" But before he attained that stage, he passed through *fana*, the stage of extinction,— of the ego self,— of nothingness. One like Jesus could say — "I and my Father are one!" But when I begin to say that, I only inflate my ego and thereby create iron chains which keep one in eternal bondage. No man can ever attain by affirming what he is *not*.

The *bhakta* knows he is nothing. The *bhakta* aspires to become a speck of dust on the lotus-feet of the beloved. And so the *bhakta* grows in humility, from more to more. He becomes as a little child, utterly dependent upon the Divine Mother. At every step, he realises his own smallness and weakness and bows down before the greatness and the omnipotence of God. In his heart is the ancient prayer— "Thou, O Lord! art so great! And Thy mercies endure for ever!"

As our spiritual life unfolds, we pass through some trying experiences. We have to face difficulty and danger, ignominy and insult. Not unoften, we feel distressed and distraught,— completely frustrated in mind and heart. Such experiences are not without a purpose. They teach us to turn to God, to depend upon Him for everything. "Thou alone art, O Lord! I am naught! I am weak. be Thou my strength!"

Calling upon God for help in times of trial and tribulation may appear to some to be a very selfish act. But all our acts, in the beginning, have to be selfish,— until we learn to become "spectators" and watch the drama of life unfold itself on the stage of time. If to rely upon God is to be selfish, it is far better to be "selfish" than to be "egoistic" and rely upon our own limited powers. This "selfishness" is a necessary step in our spiritual evolution and will, at the right time, drop of its own accord,— even as the flower drops when the fruit is born.

The one lesson we all need to learn is,— utter dependence upon God. Everything else will follow. We must learn to turn to God for every little thing we need,— until, one blessed day, we find that we need nothing. our one and only need is God! When this happens, all that we need is provided for,— naturally, spontaneously, always at the right time. Before we need a thing, it is already there. Everything comes to pass at the right time in the right way. Then one moves through life like a king. When a king moves out every thing is prepared for him in advance. he does not have to ask for anything. All his needs are anticipated and provided for. Ye are kings! Why wander ye like the king's children, in the story, who starved and were clothed in rags, though around them were heaps of costly raiment and choice foods?

It is the year 1910. Dear Dadaji (Sri T. L. Vaswani) is in England. He has visited several places in Europe and

spoken to eager audiences of the message of India's Rishis and Saints His address at the Welt Congress, the World Congress of Religions, at Berlin,— at which he has represented India,— and his subsequent lectures in different parts of Europe have aroused deep interest in Indian thought and religion and kindled in many hearts the flame of love,— love of God and His suffering creation His work in Europe is now over He is ready to return to India but he has not the money to purchase a ticket he does not worry he knows that a ticket will come to him at the right time

That afternoon, he receives an invitation to tea from the Maharani of Cooch Behar She is in England on a holiday trip Dadaji takes tea with her In the course of her talk, the Maharani says to Dadaji — “May I make a request?”

Dadaji smiles in answer

The Maharani says — “I understand that you have finished your work in Europe and are returning to India Permit me to get you a ticket to India ”

Dadaji is not surprised He knows that the life of him who completely trusts in God is one endless, ceaseless round of “miracles ” They are not miracles they are the normal, natural working of the Divine Mother who anticipates the needs of Her trusting children and provides for them Wondrous are Her ways! Blessed be Her Name!

We, too, have learnt to trust, but our trust is misplaced We lay our trust in things which cannot trust themselves We lay our trust in banks which fail and in bonds whose values fluctuate with every passing whim of a statesman or a dictator We lay our trust in children and friends who do not hesitate to betray the trust, when it suits them We lay our trust in earthy power and dominion, in abundance of worldly goods which are perishable and pass away We do all this with a view to build up security of an uncertain life in an uncertain future Alas! we sacrifice the security

of a certain life in the certain present, which would be ours if only we placed our trust in God!

When we lay our trust outside God, we bind ourselves to a life of ceaseless struggle And struggle means uncertainty struggle means anxiety, worry We are tossed hither and thither like a storm- beaten boat knowing not whither we move All our time is spent in providing for some untoward happening which need not occur at all All our time is spent in making preparations for living, so that we really never live at all Little wonder if our lives are bereft of the joy of living

A man met me the other day He is a clerk in a Government office He earns enough to be able to live a comfortable life But he always appears to be in need

"What do you do with your salary?" I asked him

"I spend only half of it," he said, "the remaining half I save for the rainy day "

"What may that be?"

And he said - "Who knows? Life is so uncertain I may meet with an accident and be disabled for life I may fall seriously ill and become unfit for work for a long time Who, then, will take care of me?"

And I said - "One there is who will take care of you!"

"Who?" he asked "I can think of none "

And I said — "He who is the Father-Mother of us all! He feeds the bird on the tree and the fish in the depths of the sea Will He not feed His own? He provides for the weak ant and the tiny insect Will He forsake those who trust in Him?"

[5]

There is a ladder which leads to the holy height where shines the white Light of Eternity It is the ladder of faith, of trust Believe in God! Trust in Him completely Know

that He will always do the very best for you Therefore co-operate with His Will Become a willing instrument in the Hands of God

In this connection, the following may be found helpful —

1 Greet difficulties with a smile and meet dangers with love Never forget that the Mother Divine is ever with you,— protecting you, guiding you, guarding you In a time of crisis feel the thrill of protection Whisper to yourself— "The Mother is holding me by the hand and I feel safe and secure!" The Mother never fails See that you do not fail Her Trust in Her till the breaking-point, and the breaking-point will never come!

2 Let prayer become a habit with you Pray, pray and continue to pray So many of our prayers remain unanswered because we soon grow tired of praying We become impatient and lose faith We feel that as God is not going to act for us, we must act for ourselves Alas! we forget that God always acts at the right time and if He does not act, it only means that the right time is not yet This applies not only to material requirements but, also, to mental and spiritual needs

3 Pray for more and more faith He who has faith has everything For, verily, "faith moves mountains," pray for faith as a famished person would pray for food, as a thirsty person would pray for water To have faith is to feel sure that whatever God does is always for the best

4 The cure of all ills,— physical, mental, spiritual,— is contact with God From time to time, detach yourself from your surroundings and enter within yourself In silence wait upon God, conscious of His presence From time to time, engage yourself in a loving and intimate dialogue with God Offer all your work to Him call out to Him for help before beginning any work and give gratitude to Him when it is over

5 Accept whatever comes to you Do not seek the

"pleasant" · do not shun the "unpleasant" But rejoice in everything that happens All that has happened, all that is happening, and is yet to happen,— all, all is for the best! Turn out all thoughts of fear and doubt and anxiety Close the windows and doors of your minds against them as you would against plague-germs Face each trial and tribulation with love and laughter Meet every situation in life with the favourite prayer of St Francis de Sales,— the prayer of which I am never tired, the prayer than which I know of no more effective formula for inner peace — "Yes, Father! Yes! and always yes!"

[6]

He who lives thus knows what it is to feel the thrill of protection and safety,— now and forever No storm can upset him no news can shock him In the midst of the most furious gale he is calm and composed as a safely— anchored boat

Such a one has controlled his passions He has eliminated his "self" and entered into a life of holiness and happiness and harmony,— the life of true freedom which belongs the children of God He owns nothing yet all the wealth of all the world belongs to him He is attached to no one yet all creatures,— men and birds and animals,— are his friends He thinks of no one as an alien All, all are his, his very own And he breathes out benedictions to all, to the "good" and the "bad" to the rich and the poor, to saints and sinners, to thieves and profligates, to the forsaken and fallen ones And to all he gives the service of love, beholding in them broken images of the beloved

Of one such man I read some time ago He was a true man of God A thief breaks into his house The thief is a poor man he and his family members have not taken a morsel of food for some days When the man of God learns of it, he says to the thief — "Do not waste your time In yonder drawer is a costly ring belonging to my wife Take it and run before she comes and catches you! And may

the peace of God be with you!"

The thief cannot believe his ears. He rubs his eyes, moves towards the drawer, takes out the ring and disappears in no time.

Soon, the wife returns and, discovering the loss, raises a hue and cry. To her husband, she says — "Some one has stolen my diamond ring costing over five thousand rupees."

"I did not know it was worth that much!" the man of God exclaims, and immediately runs after the thief.

The man of God overtakes the thief and says to him — "I have come to tell you that the ring you have taken is worth over five thousand rupees. See that you do not part with it for a smaller amount!"

The eyes of the thief are touched with tears. He finds himself, face to face, with a new experience. He had never, in all his life, seen the resemblance of such love. And in a single moment, his life is changed, transformed — he becomes a new man.

The man of God was a true *bhakta* of the Lord. He was rich in wealth,— the only wealth that counts,— the wealth of love. He loved God with all the intensity of his being. And in acts of daily life, he taught that to love God is to do the Will of God. If there is one thing which God wills for us, it is this that we love our fellow—men as He Himself loves them. To love our fellow-men is to live for them and, if need be, to die for them! Such a life, as it unfolds from day to day, becomes, an unending love-story,— stranger, indeed, than fiction and richer than a romance!

YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

[1]

I met him many years ago in a small village in the province of my birth,—Beloved Sind. The more I saw him the more did the love and reverence of my lowly heart move out to him. He had the face of a child and in his large, luminous eyes was the light of peace. His presence radiated joy and to be near him was to forget the worries and cares of earthly existence.

He was a simple man,—simple and obscure, unknown except to a few. He was not rich in the wealth of the world. The garments he wore had holes in them and I am not sure if he had two full meals a day. Yet his face smiled. Truly was he a happy man,—one of the happiest that I have ever seen. Of the wealth of wisdom he had an abundance, and he was rich in the resources of the Spirit. Out of his mouth fell rubies of rare value,—sayings rich in wisdom such as I have not read in books nor heard from other human lips.

"To run after pleasure and power," he said to me once, "is like licking honey spread on the sharp edge of a razor. It may taste sweet but it will cut the tongue in twain!"

One day, I asked him for a motto. He gave it in the three words — "Onward! Forward! Godward!" "The earth is not a resting place," he said. "You have to move on. To rest is to fall. The heavily-laden bullock does not rest as he moves through the mire for him to rest is to sink into the mire and be swallowed by it. The world is a mire. If you

would pass safely through it, move on and on! Do not slacken in your efforts!"

His was a magnetic personality. A force seemed to go out of him which irresistibly drew many who came near him. He was a *bhakta* (devotee) of the Lord. And when I asked him to speak to me of the secret of his life, he expressed it in five simple words — "The Lord is my refuge!"

There was something in his voice, something in the way he uttered those words. They went deep into my heart like arrows. For several days and nights the words kept on ringing in my ears, clear as a clarioncall. I heard their echoes in my dreaming and in my waking hours. I repeated the words as a *mantra* of my life and felt uplifted, enriched, purified — "The Lord is my refuge!" "The Lord is my refuge!"

[2]

To seek refuge is to trust in the Lord,—fully, completely, entirely. It is to know that He is the One Light that shines and shines and ever shines. Though the storms howl and the darkness deeper grows, His Light shines on! He is the Creator and Nourisher of all that is. He is the Deliverer from whom all evils flee. He is nearer to us than our heartbeats and closer than our breathing. He is the All-Powerful One whose Hands are everywhere. He is sufficient as a Friend, sufficient as a Helper. There is not a corner too remote for His help to reach us. He is the All-Loving One whose ears are ever attentive to the prayers of His wayward children. He is the All-Knowing One who does what is the very best for us. With Him all things are possible and if He chooses not to do certain things which we wish to be done, it is not because He cannot do them but because He will not do them for our own good. So it is that he who hath found his refuge in the Lord is ever ready and willing to do God's will. "Not my will but Thine be done, O Lord!"

is his constant prayer

He who trusts in the Lord knows that he is being led safely and though he moves through fire and flood, the Lord is ever by him and that is all he needs. A girl prayed to God that she might be so blessed as to stand first in her school examination. She was a brilliant student and she had worked hard. All her class-mates felt sure she would secure the rank of honour. When the result was announced, she was told that she had secured not the first but the fourth rank. Imagine her deep disappointment! And yet when she returned home, she went to her little shrine and prayed — "What a relief, Lord! that even in this hour of disappointment, Thou art by me." Such is the prayer of the man of true faith, of him who has taken refuge in the Lord — "Thou art still by me, and that is all I need!"

The man of refuge is a man of true and deep prayer. He prays not only in time of need and distress but lifts up his heart to God at all times and seeks His help and guidance at every step. He has learnt to rely on God in all circumstances and so, when faced with danger or difficulty, does not lose heart. His constant cry is — "On one but God do I rely. In Him do I trust." So is such a man at rest in all the changing scenes of life's passing show.

God is the All-Powerful One who holds in the palm of His Hand the master-key to all problems. How often do we not get baffled in the face of difficult situations! And yet there is not a problem which has no solution. In fact, there is no problem at all to one who has given himself over to God. Such a one sees nothing but God's love. Wherever he turn he greets the love of God. He lives in the love of God. He moves in the love of God. He grows from more to more in the love of God. In every situation and circumstance of life he beholds the love of God. If the warm rays of the sun radiate His love, the cold rains of winter transmit it no less. If abundance of God's wealth

speak of His love, poverty and destitution convey it no less If health and a robust body are witness to His love, sickness and disease speak of it no less If the food I eat sings of His love, the pangs of hunger, when I starve, describe it no less It is God's love that sings to me in the cool breeze and the flowing stream, in the singing bird and the leafy tree, in the radiant sun and the twinkling star and it is the same love that speaks in the city's tumult and the tempest's roar, in the famine that stalks the land and the pestilence that casts the shadow of death on every door

If I aim only at the satisfaction of my desires,— however noble they be, — if I work with a view to win success or the crowd's applause, if the purpose of my life is to accumulate things and desire pleasure out of them, I shall find not happiness but emptiness For all these are shadow-shapes which come and go The true joy of life is not in them but in the will of the Lord who made me and who made all things that He might give me His love through them

The chief purpose of my life should not be to seek pleasure and possessions, power and authority, success and security, health and wealth, or even knowledge and wisdom, or their opposites, poverty and pain, ignominy and defeat, disease and death The purpose of my life should be to seek the will of God and to adore it in the incidents and occurrences of life In all the happenings of life let me learn to say to myself —"This is what God wills for me In this does He send me His love In doing as He wills me do, I receive His love and give it back to Him and with it give myself to Him So may I grow into the likeness of Him who is the Purest of the pure, the Fairest of the fair"

[3]

He who seeks refuge in the Lord becomes a servant of

the Will Divine He welcomes not gain, he fears not loss He desires not pleasure, he runs not away from pain He seeks not success, nor does he avoid failure He accepts all that comes to him as a gift from the Lord who loves him and whom he loves And he finds that life is the great Guru Life is the great teacher, the great initiator Every experience enriches his interior life, leads him onward in the march to the True, the Good, the Beautiful and the Holy Every pain makes him perfect, every suffering makes him strong Wonderful are the words which Beloved Dadaji (Sri T L Vaswani) gave, the other day, to a brother who with tears in his eyes spoke of the struggles he had to face "The greater the struggle," Dadaji said, "the nobler the man!"

Not long ago, a sister came to me Her eyes were touched, with tears She sobbed as she spoke Her husband, whom she loved and who loved her, had decided to travel to a distant land for purposes of business He did not lack money God had given him several lakhs of rupees "He does not need to go so far, leaving me here all alone," she said "Pray that he may abandon this idea altogether "

My answer might have appeared cruel to her at that time "I do not pray for this or that to happen," I said to her "I shall pray that you may grow into an understanding of what God wills for you and that you may co-operate with His will and let it work, uninterrupted, in and through you"

The day arrived when she bade her husband a tearful goodbye "You did not do anything for me," she said to me "You could have helped me if only you had wished to do so!"

I smiled and said to her — "Sister! do not despair! God fulfills Himself in many ways!"

After a few months she met me again Her face was

wreathed in smiles She laughed as a little child "Now I know," she said, "that there is the hand of Divine Love and Wisdom in all that happens When my husband left, I wept and wept Then, gradually, it dawned on me that if God had willed my dear one to travel to a far country, it must all be for my good Indeed, it has proved to be so My husband's going away has given me many spare hours I utilise them in a study of the *Gita* and *Guru Granth Sahib* and Beloved Dadaji's beautiful books on the *Sant-bani* and the lives of Saints I pray and I meditate I sit in Beloved Dadaji's holy company I sing God's Name and I serve the children of the poor and the lowly They love me I love them And I feel happy and blest!"

This is perfectly true Our journey through life has been perfectly planned by Infinite Love and Infinite Wisdom There can be no mistake Every experience that comes to us is just the right experience occurring at the right time to train us in the right way So let us accept all that comes to us and not attempt to circumvent anything Again and again we try to run away from what appears to us as unpleasant experiences We try to avoid what we regard as difficult situations We may succeed in keeping them away for the time being but we can never avoid them all the time, for they are, indeed, essential to our growth God means us to face them and so to develop our moral and spiritual muscles If we avoid an unpleasant experience, it will return to us in due course with redoubled force and we shall be compelled to take up its challenge until we have learnt the lesson it has come to teach us The best way, therefore, to face difficult situations is to accept them and co-operate with their inner purpose, all the while fixing our mind and heart on Him who has planned for each one of us the glorious liberty that belongs to the children of the Spirit

He whose refuge is the Lord lives in the constant awareness of God's presence Such a man is never alone

Another is always with him, by him, blessing him, guiding him, protecting him, leading him on! He hears His gentle footfalls he feels the warm pressure of His Hand on his he hearkens to the voice of his Unseen Friend and he always feels safe and secure even in the face of danger and death

I recall a most moving incident in the life of Muhammad, the great Prophet of Islam, whom the world has yet to understand aright Information has reached him that his life is in danger, that people are out to kill him under cover of the night It is a dark hour With tear-touched eyes Muhammad leaves his home and the town of his birth with him is his faithful friend and follower, Abu Bakr In hot pursuit of these two devoted servants of God are those who wish to kill Muhammad They are so many and they are riding strong steeds and in their hands are drawn swords and sharp lances Abu Bakr sees them from a distance and feels nervous In the agony of terror, he says to Muhammad — "They are coming soon will they slay us with their sharp swords And our bodies will lie on the desert sands to be devoured by the wild animals"

Muhammad is silent he speaks not a word In his heart he feels sure that God is with him and no harm can come his way Nearby is a cave Muhammad and Abu Bakr hide themselves in its depths The party of persecutors halt at the mouth of the cave their leader suspects that Muhammad is hidden inside the cave Abu Bakr begins to tremble and whispers to Muhammad — "What shall we do now? We are only two and they are so many!" Quietly, answers Muhammad — "Not so, friend! we are not two but three The third is Allah And when He is near, we need not fear!"

A miracle has happened Just after the two fugitives entered the cave and a little before the party of persecutors arrives, a huge spider crawled to the entrance of the cave and wove its web across it Seeing the web, unbroken and

whole, some of the persecutors exclaim — "Muhammad cannot have got into the cave Don't you see the spider's web covering the entrance? Had anyone got in, the web would have been torn Let us not waste precious time let us move on!" Muhammad is saved!

The man who seeks refuge in the Lord is untouched by troubles and tribulations of the world, its wants and woes, its cares and anxieties He feels light as the smoke of incense which rises higher and higher He is not earth-bound His only quest is God He yearns for God he talks to God and to God he offers every thought, every word, every little deed of his daily life He abides in God And he feels like a child resting in the loving arms of its mother Dropping all his burdens at the Lotus-feet of the Lord, he is freed from the fever and fret of the world He moves through life, singing as he goes, singing the deathless song of the Beloved Of such as he the Gita says -

*He lives each day
Looking at the world with quiet eyes,
Living in perfect harmony with all,
Undisturbed, his mind ever at rest!
He neither loveth nor hateth
He neither grieveth nor desireth
Renouncing both good and evil
He accepts all that comes
As the will of the Lord!
Alike is he in cold and heat
In pleasure, pain,
In censure, praise
Devoid of all attachment,
His mind is firm in faith,
His heart is full of devotion
In the shifting scenes
Of this changing world,
He clings to the Lord alone
And in Him finds his shelter true!*

LOVE AND LAUGH!

[1]

Many years, ago, something happened which threw me out of gear, and I fell into a slough of despond I became sad, dejected, depressed

I met Beloved Dadaji (Sri T. L. Vaswaniji) He looked at my wretched face but once he did not look again Nor did he speak to me a single word of comfort in that hour of agony He behaved as though he had not seen me! And thereafter, for four or five days, he refused to meet me. Living under the same roof, I was denied the privilege of seeing him whom I loved with no earthly love

I could not understand what I then took to be Dadaji's callous indifference And the "old man" who resides within everyone whispered to me—"Now you know how much Dadaji loves you!"

It took me five days to realise that I must cast off all looks of sadness before I could become worthy of being admitted to Beloved Dadaji's presence Putting on a forced smile, I went upto him and asked for his blessings He was loving as ever As he enfolded me in a warm embrace, unbidden tears rolled down my cheeks He spoke to me affectionately, as though nothing had happened I realised

what a blunder I had committed by appearing before Dadaji with a sullen face

Many months later, Dadaji spoke to me of St Francis,— of the sufferings this prince amongst men had to undergo "And yet," Dadaji said, "St Francis never renounced the smile on his lips. He was free from melancholy. He looked cheerful. He retained his sunny serenity and he retained his humour. To his brothers, he said, when laying down for them the rules of discipline — "Ye shall take care that ye do not behave outwardly like melancholy hypocrites. But ye shall behave in the Lord, fresh and gay and agreeable."

The sweet, serene, bright face of St Francis has been one of the inspirations of my life. I have meditated on it, again and again,—and on his love-lit eyes. Not unoften, I have recalled to myself one of his wonderful sayings — "To the devil belongs to be sad, but to us ever to be glad and rejoice in the Lord." St Francis was an apostle of spiritual cheerfulness. He was never mournful or melancholy. In the depths of sorrow, he would suddenly break forth into a song of praise to his beloved Master, Jesus.

Of St Francis it is said that, one day, he met a disciple whose face wore a look of sadness. Immediately, St Francis rebuked him, saying — "Why this outward grief and sadness? Let it be between you and God. But before me and others strive to be cheerful. Remember, it is not seemly that a servant of God should show a sad and troubled face before his brethren."

[2]

It is popularly believed that sadness is due to certain things which happen outside of us. The cause of sadness is often traced to a misfortune or misadventure, a calamity

or catastrophe, an accident or adversity, a hardship or humiliation. In truth, all sadness is from within. Sadness is the result of our inner attitude towards outer happenings. Persons placed in similar circumstances react in different ways. Some may be joyful as a thrush, others may feel frustrated, unhappy, sad at heart. When Raja Janaka's palace was on fire, he sat serene and calm. His carpets and rugs, his tables and chairs, his settees and sofas, his dais and divans, his couches and cushions were consumed by leaping flames. He was undisturbed. "Fire cannot burn that which is truly mine!" he said. In the palace was a *sanyasin*,—a man who was supposed to have renounced everything. He was overcome with grief at the loss of an old loin-cloth which was burnt in the flames!

On the day on which the result of an examination was announced, I felt sad. I had missed the first rank. One of my class-mates, who secured the 29th rank, felt very happy. When I expressed surprise that he should feel so happy at having secured a low rank, he quietly answered — "I am grateful that I have passed!"

There is a touching little story told us of a Buddhist *bhikkhu*. He was the son of a rich nobleman and lived in a palace. Coming under the influence of the Buddha, he renounces his wealth and comfort and accepts the hardships of a mendicant's life. He sleeps on the bare ground underneath trees. He eats what he gets by way of alms. He feels happy. One day, he gets an attack of rheumatic pain. At first, he treats it with indifference. Days pass by. The pain persists. He cannot walk with ease. At times, he cannot meditate properly. He feels miserable. Gone is the joy of life. However hard he tries, he cannot recapture his lost peace. His mind becomes sluggish, he feels nerve-tired and weary. One day, as he is out begging alms, he finds a little girl playing with her friends. She is a cripple. She has only one leg and hobbles on crutches.

But she is happy as a wave dancing on the sea She shouts and laughs and makes merry with other children Seeing her the *bhikkhū* feels ashamed of himself "This little girl who has only one leg is bright and happy," he says to himself "and I a disciple of the Buddha, despair because of a little pain!" He returns a new man The pain no longer troubles him He is free!

Sadness is not due to what happens to us it is due to what happens within us Significant are the words of Sir Oliver Cromwell, the man who must have faced dangers and difficulties almost everyday—"I bless God I have been inured to difficulties, and I never found God failing when I trusted in Him " If only we learn to trust in Him, in all situations and circumstances of life, no disappointment can touch us I recall how, on one occasion, a piece of disconcerting news was communicated to Beloved Dadaji "You must have felt disappointed to get the news," I said to him "My child!" he quietly answered, "never forget that disappointments, too, are His appointments" And he smiled

The man who has learnt the art of living draws from the trials and tribulations of life the strength he needs to serve God and His suffering creation Wonderful are the words of advice which St Francis de Sales gave to his brothers—"Remember that bees make the sweetest honey from the flowers of the thyme,—a small and bitter herb "

[3]

Sadness and "self" go together The more of "self" there is in us, the more sad we are likely to become, at the slightest mishap And "self" has many forms There is the body-self which keeps us imprisoned to the desires and appetites of the body These desires are as a fire which rages within us, robbing us of the joy of life He who

attempts to gratify the senses knows how futile it is to do so To satisfy the appetites is like adding fuel to the fire The *rishi* of the Upanishad had greater insight into life than many of our modern psychologists, who advocate the cult of sense-satisfaction, when he declared that not all the beautiful women of the world can satisfy the lust of a single man The man who has surrendered to his carnal self is never happy

Then there is the mind-self which binds us to ideas and ideals And there are subtler formless selves of which every earnest seeker on the Path has some experience they are the selves which we create when we take delight in virtues we have acquired or in the "progress" we have made in spiritual life And the more subtle a self, the more firmly it binds me to itself, the more miserable it makes me

The true joy of life is in the Self concerning whom the Gita says —

*The senses, it is said, are great
Greater than the senses is the mind
Greater than the mind is the intelligence
But greater than the intelligence is He, the Self*

That art thou! *Tat twamasi!* Thou art the Self And the Self is ever pure, ever free Established in the Self, thou mayst know the joy that is independent of all outer happenings, the joy that nothing, no one, can take away, So Jesus said to his disciples—"My joy I give unto you, and your joy no man taketh from you!"

The body is not the Self The senses are not the Self The intellect, which plays such an important role in modern life, is not the Self I recall the words of Upali, the barber-disciple of the Buddha — "The intellect is a clever thing, but it over-reaches itself Do you see that monkey making a great commotion like an earthquake in yon tree? See!

Now he reaches over and springs to another tree, making a great commotion there, also, and nothing does he achieve thereby Thus it is with the intellect it over-reaches everything, thinking with its absurdly insignificant brain to accomplish things, when all it can do is to bring them into difficult straits ”

Seek your joy in the Self It is within you And the way to the Self is the way of denying yourself He who forsakes himself, abides in the Lord, Such a one hath fullness of joy Most moving are the words of Guru Nanak.—

*Behold' in thine own Heart
Dwelleth He,—thy King'
And the way to Him
Is the way of Love'
Love Him,—not thyself?
Think as He thinketh'
Will as He Willeth'
Do as He commandeth'
Renounce thy little self
And find the fullness of joy
At His Lotus-Feet'*

[4]

When a black mood of gloom and despair creeps over you, perhaps, the best and simplest way to ward it off is to laugh Laughter is contagious If someone laughs in your presence, you find it difficult to control laughter There is a man who has pinned to his wall pictures of men and women and children laughing heartily Whenever he feels sad or depressed, he has but to take a look at the pictures on the wall he cannot help but smile,—and immediately feels better

I read of a man who rendered immense service to patients in a hospital All he had with himself was an

album which cost next to nothing it was a collection of "laughing" pictures taken from discarded newspapers and magazines With this album he went to patients, many of whom were in the throes of physical agony They had not known what it was to smile, for weeks together At the sight of the "laughing" picture, they burst into laughter They forgot their physical ailments for a while they felt so very much better This must have helped them in making a speedy recovery

Laughter is medicine It helps in building up moral muscles It is a spiritual tonic It has a great cleansing power When you feel sad or down-cast, look at your face in a mirror It looks so tense, so ugly, so unlike the face you would wish others to see The strain in the face is due to some negative emotion which is playing havoc in the mind One way of breaking the force of the negative emotion is to relax Relax the whole body As you do so, you will find that the last part of the body to relax is always the face and of the face the mouth is the last part to relax So smile and laugh! And you will see how quickly the clouds vanish and you are happy again!

The secret of relaxation is in the three words — "Let it go" Life is full of incidents, both pleasant and unpleasant When an unpleasant thing happens, we are apt to lose our balance this creates a negative emotion which expresses itself in a feeling of sadness or depression An effective way of dealing with such a situation is to go to the root of the matter and "let go" What is causing the negative emotion. Let it go! Let everything go!

Has my sister failed to understand me? Let it go! Has my brother spoken ill of me? Let it go! Has my best friend turned against me? Let it go! Have I suffered loss in business? Let it go! Have my plans been upset? Let it go! Have I been treated with disrespect? Let it go? Has a dear

one passed on? Let it go! Has my health suffered a setback? Let it go! Have I been cheated, robbed, deceived by some one in whom I placed my trust? Let it go! —

In this world of transitoriness,—a world in which things come and go, is there anything worth worrying over? Let it go! The more we let go, the more do we conserve our energies for the constructive and creative tasks of life

There is a beautiful little incident in the life of Aesop, the great story-teller. One day Aesop is playing with little children, shouting and laughing with them. An Athenian passes by; he expresses surprise that such a grown-up person should waste his time thus. In answer, Aesop picks up a bow and, unstringing it, lays it on the ground. To the Athenian, he says —“O wise one! tell me the meaning of this unstrung bow!” The man is perplexed; he finds no suitable answer. “I cannot solve your riddle,” he says, “tell me what it means.” And Aesop says to him —“If you keep a bow always bent, it will lose its elasticity. But if you *let it go* slack, it will be fitter for use when you want it.”

Are we not,—many of us,—like the bent bow, always highly strung? We need to unstring ourselves, to relax from time to time, that we may be “fitter for use.” When we are called to action. And to relax we need to learn to “let go.”

[5]

True relaxation is resting,—resting in God,—until God’s *shakti* flows into us, fills our entire being. So it is necessary to enter into silence from time to time. “The very first word in the Scripture of Life,” Beloved Dadaji said, “is silence!” Sit quietly at the Lotus-feet of the Lord and gaze and gaze at His beauteous Face and, in that gaze, be lost to yourself. This is it to be still. In stillness will God’s

strength flow into us, rejuvenating us, revitalising us and we shall feel as new men and women, sons and daughters of God

The true strength of life is the strength of stillness. The world worships the strength of action, and this is often cruel, aggressive, tainted with sordid selfishness. True strength belongs to him who has learnt to rest in God. Such a one becomes the very picture of peace. He radiates peace to a world filled with noise and discord, hate and strife. Out of him flow healing vibrations of peace, as some calm river flowing through the desert of life. He blesses all who come to him and is himself blessed!

Such a man abides in the Lord, and the Lord abides in him. The twain dwell together in a hidden place known only to them. That hidden place is our true Home. To it he repairs, again and again. And in all the changing vicissitudes of life, he feels safe and secure. Outside, storms may howl and thunders growl and lightnings flash, he is not afraid. Nothing upsets him. The shocks of the world are by him easily absorbed. He is ever calm, assured, at rest. But he is not idle. He is a man of activity, dedicated, creative activity. He works, offering all his actions at the Lotus-feet of the Lord. He works as an instrument of the Will Divine. His work is worship. He achieves what the Gita calls "inaction in action." In his life silence is blended with action and he arrives at a stage at which, in the words of the great Chinese seer, Laotse, he does "nothing and everything is done!"

We work so strenuously, so hard, and yet achieve nothing. We work for the good of the community, society, nation, humanity. We sacrifice our health, our wealth, our rest and leisure. Yet our work seems to do no good, the world speeds on from confusion to chaos, from danger to destruction. Our work is not in tune with the Divine Will.

Our work is tainted with the self, —selfish motives, desire for prominence, thoughts of reward in the life beyond this life We have not renounced the ego We have not offered up our lives in the great sacrifice of the universe

The man who offers his life, his all, at the Lotus-feet of the Lord works with peace in the heart He works as a servant of God and Man He sees that men and women suffer in this world of tragedy and tears he gives to all the service of love His work does not take him away from God His work is God-guided work "Not I but the Father in me works," he says His work is ever the work of God In his work there is no hustle, no bustle, no fuss, no noise, no aimless rushing about In his work is,—love for all! He loves and he laughs In his work there is no unrest, but peace,—the peace that passeth understanding He is free from attachment and hatred,—and from all fear He fears no one, and he does not fear death He smiles in the face of death!

[6]

Of one such man I read, the other day He was an early disciple of Christ He lived at a time when to become a devotee of Christ was to invite death by torture But he was not afraid He was a simple peasant he lived by the sweat of his brow As he tilled the land, he sang within his heart the Name of his Master He tilled for the love of Christ His land yielded abundant grain He kept a little for himself, sharing the rest with the poor in whom he beheld the radiant face of his Beloved His house was open to all who needed food and shelter And many were the pilgrims and wayfarers with whom he shared his simple meals and the love of his big, beautiful heart

The Government of his day learns of his deep devotion to Jesus Soldiers are sent to kill him They arrive at his village, a little after sunset They want food and shelter for

the night They are told that in the village is a man who denies hospitality to none They go to him, not knowing that it is he whom they have come to kill He meets them with the warmth of love he serves them he gives them food to eat When he asks them the purpose of their visit, he learns that they have come to kill him The soldiers ask for his help in locating the man they have come to kill He promises to do so the next morning, asking them to spend the night in his cottage He attends to their needs he prepares beds for them he puts them to sleep

What does he do then? He does not run away from the village, but goes out and digs a grave for himself He is not afraid of death He is happy as a bride on her wedding-day He is eager, to meet the Eternal Bridegroom, the Spouse of the soul He keeps awake the whole night, communing with his Lord and Master.

At the dawning of the next day, he says to the soldiers — "I am he whom you seek. My head is before you do your duty!" The soldiers are taken aback. They are loath to take the life of this most marvellous man and fain would give him a chance to escape But he says to them — "Fear not, brothers! You have come to lay on my poor, underserving head the crown of martyrdom I die for the love of my Master,—Jesus Christ!" And as they chop off his head, there are tears in the eyes of the soldiers but his face is filled with an unearthly light He is not afraid of death He smiles in the face of death When they ask him the secret of his life, he says — "There is no secret I simply love and I laugh Each moment I delight in the Lord! I try to live the teachings of my Master in my daily life and I have the fullness of joy which no man may take away from me!"

"I love and I laugh!" In these five simple words is summed up the secret of this remarkable man How many of us can truthfully say that we love and we laugh? Do we

love all,—men and birds and animals? It is easy to love our friends do we love those that bear ill-will towards us? It is easy to love our kith and kin, our dear and near ones do we love strangers? It is easy to love those that praise us do we love those that condemn and speak ill of us? It is easy to love those that help us do we love those that spitefully use us or exploit us to selfish ends? It is easy to love the rich, the wealthy, and those that are in authority dressed do we love the poor and lonely, the forsaken and forlorn ? It is easy to love the "good" and "virtuous" do we love the sinner, the criminal, the thief and the robber? Do we love those that have gone astray and those whom our laws,—just and unjust,— have made prisoners? Do we love birds and animals who, alas! each day are driven to the slaughter-house to satisfy our corpulence and edacity? Do we love trees and plants, leaves and flowers and blades of grass? Do we love rivers and seas, hills and mountains, stones and stars? Do we love each grain of sand, each drop of water, each ray of light? Do we love God and do we love His creatures for the sake of God?

And do we laugh,—in all conditions and circumstances of life? It is easy to laugh when fortune favours us do we laugh when misfortune dogs our footsteps ? Do we laugh in the face of suffering and sorrow, of danger and difficulty, of trial and tribulation, of disease and death? Do we laugh when our dear ones desert us, when our friends forsake us and we are left alone in this wide, wonderful world? Do we laugh when all around us is darkness and not a star doth shine

Until we have learnt to love and laugh, we are not ready to be led into the Kingdom of God Our hearts are hard they need to become soft and supple Our soil is not fertile it needs to be ploughed with love and laughter If the ground is hard, the seed will not grow Prepare the ground! Prepare it with love and laughter!

HIS FACE DOTH SHINE IN ALL!

[1]

In front of me is a copy of the Bhagavad Gita which enshrines the ageless wisdom of the Lord I open it at random and my eyes fall on the following *sloka* (verse) —

*Who sees Me
Deathlessly dwelling
In all that is,
And who sees
All in Me,—
Of him I shall not lose hold,
Nor he of Me!*

Wondrous words these! I have read and re-read them I have meditated on their inner meaning and significance And it seems to me that this *sloka* of the Gita enshrines a teaching of great practical value,— a teaching which is intimately related to life and its problems, shedding on them a radiance like that of the sun smiling through the clouds

What says the Lord? I am in all that is,—in men and birds and animals, in fish and fowl, in worms and insects,—aye, in trees and flowers, in rivers and rocks, in stones and stars, in the pen which scribbles, and the paper on which the moving finger writes Krishna,—the Eternal Beloved,—is in all that is ' And all are in Krishna! He who hath this

vision,— the vision of the One in all and all in One,—will never lose hold of the Lord nor will the Lord lose hold of him

Krishna is in all that is ' In every nook and corner is He' With His Presence is every atom radiant He is in the sinner and the criminal He is in the sage and the saint He is in the young and the strong He is in the old and the weak-bodied He is in the rich and the prosperous He is in the poor and the forlorn So it is that we have a *sloka* in the Gita which says —

*He who looks alike on all,—
The Brahmin versed in scriptural love,
The mild-eyed cow,
The elephant and the dog,
The outcast shunned by men,—
He who sees in them all the One Divine,
He sees, indeed!*

Beautiful are the words of the *Upanishad* — “So bless me, Lord! that I may with equal eyes look upon a serpent and a garland of flowers, a deadly foe and a loving friend, a precious pearl and a clot of earth, a bed of flowers and a slab of stone, a beautiful damsel and a bundle of hay!” The man whose “eyes” are thus “equalised” has broken the glamour of the earth’s greatness and glory, its pomp and power, its possessions and pleasures. Nothing can bind him he is the truly free man

There is a beautiful story of Jesus told us in an Islamic tradition A group of men ask Jesus —

“How is it that you can walk on the waters but we cannot?”

Jesus holds out his hands before them In his right hand is a piece of gold in his left hand is a little dust And Jesus

*In thistle and thorn,
In radiant roses,
In fragrant flowers,
In gentle dew drops,
In showers of rain,
In roving clouds,
In murmuring brooks,
In winds and storms,
In flood and fire,
In every creature,
And in the very silence
Of night and sleep!*

*

*So have I found Thee, Beloved!
And I sing of Thee, again and again!
I have entered into illumination!
I have seen I have known
I have been re-born
In the ecstasy of bliss!*

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[3]

It is not given to all to behold, Mira-like, the One Beloved in all This deeply mystical experience is a gift of God's grace It cometh not without much suffering and anguish of the heart For the heart needs to be purified, purged of all desire, before it can mirror the Face of the Lord As gold is purified by being burnt in the fire, so is the soul purified in the fire of yearning

This purification is detachment He who would be pure must be free from all attachment to things and creatures, to pleasure and power, to honours and applause,—to his own self And this means isolation, loneliness, suffering, pain Not without spiritual anguish and suffering may the soul be enriched with that deep concentration which gives

birth to the vision in the heart,—the vision of the One in all, the vision which beholds the One Face Divine in all creatures and all situations of life.

Such an experience may not be within easy reach of all. There is, however, one simple discipline which we all can practise in our daily life. In our dealings with fellow-men, let us evoke Krishna, evoke the Lord. When I speak to a brother, let me speak to Krishna in him. For Krishna is in all. Significant are the words in the *Shiva Stotra* — "I dwell neither in Kailash nor in Vaikuntha. My habitation is the hearts of earnest devotees." The Prince of Sufi mystics, Jalalud-Din Rumi, says — "God dwells in the heart of the believing devotee. He who cares to seek Him out, let him seek Him there!" And in the *Yajur Veda*, one of the most ancient testaments of humanity, we read — "God lives in the heart of man, so it is that the heart is called *hrdaya*." Equally significant are the words of the great prophet of Islam, Muhammad — "The heart of man is the seat of *Rahman*,—the God of compassion." And Sri Krishna's words to his best-beloved disciple, Arjuna, are clear beyond a shadow of doubt — "Arjuna! I am seated in the hearts of all!"

Deep down in the hearts of all sits the Lord, protecting us, nourishing us with His love, leading us, if only we will accept His guidance. Our superficial selves are not our true selves. The self that talks, walks and works, eats and sleeps, kicks up quarrels, is elated when honoured and shirks at a single word of reproach,—the self with which I have identified myself, the self whose joys are my joys, whose suffering are my sorrows,—that self is not my true Self. My true Self is Krishna, even as the true Self of all that is, is Krishna. When, in my dealings with others, I behold Krishna in them, I but call forth the very best that is in them. Sinners and criminals, gamblers and murderers,

asks — "Which of the two is dearer to you?"

Without a moment's hesitation they cry out with one voice — "Gold!"

And Jesus says to them — "Both are alike to me "

This is the difference between Jesus and an average man. To him gold is the most precious possession. To Jesus it is the same as ashes and dust. So to Jesus the solid "earth" and the "fluid" waters were the same and he could walk with equal ease over land and sea !

Of Sri Ramakrishna Parmahansa, too, we read that, in the early days of his *sadhana* (spiritual discipline), he sat by the river-bank and, holding a clod (*matī*) in one hand and a silver rupee (*taka*) in the other, threw them both into the river, repeating to himself in the joy of renunciation — "*Taka, Matī! Matī, taka!*" Thus did he teach himself the truth that silver and a clod of earth are the same.

"In every form behold the One Face of Beauty to see aught else is a sin!" So sings Sachal, the well-beloved poet-saint of Sind. The *rishi* of the Upanishad says — "The knower of God realises unity in all. The man of true knowledge finds all beings in himself and himself in all beings. Every particle hath become his self. He is attached to none, he has hatred towards none!" Such a one has broken all bonds. Crossing the vale of sorrow, he enters into the freedom of the sons of God!

[2]

"Who is truly blest amongst men?" was the question asked of a sage.

And he answered — "He is truly blest who beholds in all the One Face Divine!"

Saint Mira was truly blest. Mira renounced her palace

and, as a pilgrim, moved out in quest of Sri Krishna,—the Beloved Her heart smitten with an unearthly yearning, her eyes radiant with the light of love, she wandered from place to place, with the song on her lips —"Where art Thou, my Beloved and my All? Where hast Thou hid Thy beauteous Face?"

After much wandering, Mira arrives at Brindaban There she is blessed with the vision of Krishna in all Wherever she turns, she beholds the beauteous Face of the Lord She sees her Beloved, everywhere,—below, around, above! The very stones in the streets, the trees and flowers, the sacred *tulsi*-leaves, the dark waves of the Yamuna, the stars that shine in the heavens,—all, all are full of Krishna The poor ones with pinched faces, the suffering ones who weep by the wayside, the struggling, starving ones are, to her, the masks which Krishna has put on He is in all Without Him there is naught "The Beloved," she says "is everything!" He is the Life of all life,—the Life, therefore, of her life, too "I live because Krishna liveth in me!" she exclaims "I am nothing Krishna is All!"

The planets and stars, the sun and moon are fragments of Krishna The lightening-flash, the thunder-growl, the bewitching rainbow, the lovely-tinted sunset do but reveal His beauty and majesty And Krishna is in rivers and rocks, in stones and stars, in shrubs and plants, and in every particle of sand on the endless sea-shore He is the Life hidden in each individual He is in birds and animals, in fish and fowl, in insect and ant He is in the saint and the sinner To Mira every creature is a theophany, an Image of the One Eternal Krishna In the joy of ecstasy, she sings —

Beloved!

I behold Thy beauteous Face

In humble blades of grass,

In leaves of trees,

*In thistle and thorn,
In radiant roses,
In fragrant flowers,
In gentle dew drops,
In showers of rain,
In roving clouds,
In murmuring brooks,
In winds and storms,
In flood and fire,
In every creature,
And in the very silence
Of night and sleep!*

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even ferocious animals, become different when we behold Krishna in them

In the measure in which I behold Krishna in another, in that measure do I put my individual, personal, empirical self aside, and the Krishna in me deals with the Krishna in him I no longer see his fault and frailties, his weaknesses and shortcomings I penetrate through them and touch the Perfect One,—the *Purushottama*,— who sits and smiles in the hearts of all I touch Him He touches me And the impossible happens! All jealousies and hatreds depart, misunderstandings cease, and enmities die away The world which is to many, a vale of tragedy and tears becomes a Garden where Gods may dwell

I remember how, many years ago, a friend of mine, in a fit of jealousy, threw at me with all his might a big stick, as I was crossing a street It missed me by a few inches In sheer fright, I ran as fast as I could, until I reached the safety of my home In my heart a battle raged Should I remain quiet or should I wreak vengeance? The words came to me, again and again — "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a leg for a leg" For three days, the storm raged then came calm, stillness, peace And I repeated to myself the words of the Buddha — "Hatred ceaseth not by hatred hatred ceaseth by love"

I sat in my silence-corner and prayed for my friend It was not easy in the beginning It cost me an effort to drive out from my mind all thoughts of bitterness and resentment towards my friend I struggled I failed I rose Again and again, I prayed — "I behold Krishna in you"

At first the words were repeated mechanically Gradually, their inner significance became clear and bitterness and resentment vanished as must before the rising sun I actually began to think of my friend as a mask which Beloved Krishna had worn I saw Krishna in him!

What wonderful, peaceful experience!

Just then, a knock was heard on the door I opened it and, to my surprise, found my friend with tears in his eyes "Forgive me," he said "I have greatly sinned!" In answer, I embraced him and my eyes too, were filled with unbidden tears

The other day, the wife of a dear friend quarrelled over something and, in a fit of temper, left her house, declaring loudly that she would put an end to her life Several hours passed she did not return to her house At about 8 o'clock in the evening, we set out in search of her We found her at the railway station, standing near a train We coaxed and cajoled her we humoured her we tried to pump sense into her all in vain! She was adamant as a rock She had resolved, she said, not to see tomorrow's sun As soon as the train started, she would fling herself underneath the moving wheels and be crushed to death She would never, never return home again We tried to pull her back, she clung all the more tightly to the train The scene attracted a small crowd, and my friend's eyes were wet with unwept tears

For a brief moment, I closed my eyes and, forgetting everything else, evoked Krishna in her —"Krishna! O Thou who art seated in her heart! reveal Thyself!" Then, opening my eyes, I spoke to her softly, gently, tenderly "Beloved sister," I said to her, "come! let us go home!" The miracle happened She who, only a brief while ago, was unrelenting as steel, yielded! She returned home

When we behold Krishna in others, we bless them and are ourselves blessed To behold Krishna in another is truly a blissful experience It sweeps clean all feeling of bitterness and resentment and suffuses our entire being with the peace which is born of understanding and love

Behold Krishna not only in men but in all creatures Did St Francis behold the Christ,—and Christ and Krishna are but two names of the one Reality, the One without a second,—in the wild wolf whose name has gone into history as the “good wolf of Gubio”? Did the Buddha behold the One Lord in the fierce elephant, Nalagin, a man-slayer? And the mad elephant, who came rushing headlong to take the life of the Buddha, become tame and docile and, bowing before the Blessed One, took the dust of his feet The people who beheld this great event from their house tops, in wide-eyed wonder, exclaimed — “Elephants are tamed with sticks and goads but the Buddha tamed the man-slaying elephant with the power of his love!”

[4]

Meister Eckhart was once asked — “What is the mark of a man of understanding?”

He answered — “The man of understanding is even he who sees one thing separated from another”

“And what is the mark of him who has risen beyond understanding?”


“This,” answered Meister Eckhart, “That he sees All in all!”

On another occasion this great German mystic, this *brahmagnani* of the West, said—

“A Flea as it is in God is nobler than the highest of angels in himself!”

He who sees things and creatures in God,—he is the truly free man He is one with all In his heart is no hatred, no feeling of jealousy or malice, rancour or resentment He

is the truly happy man Sorrow cannot touch him suffering cannot draw nigh to him He is firmly established in himself,—in the joy of the *Atman* within him He amongst men is a true child of God, an heir to all the glories of heaven and earth The rivers run through his veins and the seas overflow in his heart The moon smiles in his face and the stars twinkle in his eyes Such a one, in the words of Thomas Traharne, doth "sing and rejoice and delight in God, as misers do in gold, as kings in sceptres " To the man who beholds God within and without,—above, below and around,—in every nook and corner, in every ray of light, in every drop of water, in every atom of an atom,—to him the world is a "mirror of Infinite Beauty," a "Temple of Majesty," a "region of Light and Peace " Such a one sings with Beloved Dadaji (Sri T L Vaswani) —

Behold!  the world is a Garden of God!

Listen! every leaf and flower, every
Plant and tree doth sing the Bhagavad
Gita,—the Song of the Lord!

THE LIFE WORTH LIVING

[1]

Several children were playing together in the School compound. They saw me from a distance and some of them, leaving their games, came running towards me. They held me by my hands they pulled me by my arms they clung to the ends of my shirt and would not let me go. "Tell us a story," they said to me.

In the hearts of the little ones is eternal hunger for songs and stories. And their pure, guileless hearts can understand the hidden meanings of words and the deeper significance of stories and parables far better than do so many of us who claim to have grown up.

Together we sat on the marble steps. The gentle, innocent faces of my little friends beamed with joy. Not knowing what to say to them, I began in the usual, simple way — "Once upon a time there was a king . "

One of the little boys interrupted me with the words:— "A king! I want to be a real king when I grow up! I shall own a big army equipped with aeroplanes and atom bombs, and I shall conquer the whole world and make every one happy!" His chest was swollen in right royal pride.

"So you want to be a king, do you?" I said to him And turning to the others I asked—"What do you want to become when you grow up?"

Quick came the answer from one of them—"I want to be a big land-lord, I want to possess huge buildings,—as big as as our School building with beautiful gardens and flowing fountains "

Another said—" I want to be a big engineer like my father I specially want to build bridges "

I said to him—"My little one! would you not rather build a bridge between East and West than build these bridges of steel and stone?"

He did not answer

A little girl, with a musical voice and glamorous eyes, said—"I want to become a cinema-star like Hema Malini!"

Another said—"I want to be the Prime Minister of India! My name is Indra and my father's name is Jawaharlal!"

A little boy said—"I want to be the best cricket-player in the world!"

Yet another said—"I want to be the first man to reach mars!"

These little children who all looked alike were so different in their plans and preferences! One simple, little boy spoke—"I long to be a servant of my people Alas! they suffer and they starve! I aspire to verify in my life the ideals which our dear Dadaji has placed before us,—the ideals of simplicity and service, of purity and prayer

The words were uttered in such sincerity that they went deep into my heart and I gave gratitude to God that there was in our midst at least one simple soul who, in some

measure, had imbibed the teaching of the Mira School

The best was yet to come In a corner sat a little golden-haired girl who had not spoken a word Her face was radiant with the light of adoration and love her eyes seemed to rest on some far-off vision I said to her —"Dear child! why are you silent? Speak to us of the dreams that lie locked up within your heart."

She hesitated before she spoke "I want to be a true child of St Mira," She said "I want to be a devotee of the Lord I want to see Him as I see you I want to touch His Lotus-feet, to speak to Him and to hear Him speak!" In her speech was a fire which the written word cannot express

"And how may that be?" I asked

And she answered —"After I have completed my studies, I shall set out in quest of a Teacher,—some-one like Dadaji, a *Sant-Satpurukha*, a Friend of God,—one who has seen God and known God and who lives and moves and has his being in God Having found such a one, I shall follow him and he will lead me to my Goal!"

I listened to her in mute wonder I bowed down to her and asked her to bless me

[2]

Thus it was in ancient India,—and in several other countries Bands of youths set out in quest of the Reality that is God They renounced their all they were attached to none Fearless were they and, full of courage, they faced the hardships of life in the true heroic spirit In the days of the Buddha, indeed, princes renounced their thrones and rich noblemen in hundreds, gave up the comforts of their stately mansions and rejoiced in the rigours of the homeless life

Today, our lives are moulded by other considerations Today, Mammon is the God we worship and in pursuit of money we lay waste all our powers Today, comfort-cults dominate us and the lust for power and possessions is strong Today, young men dream the dreams of building up careers of honour and power

Yet, even today, there are souls, scattered here and there, who are restless until they find their rest in God God, to them, is the one Reality of life all else is an illusion In their hearts burns the fire of longing Again and again, they cry out—"O, for someone who may take us out of our little selves into the larger life of the Spirit!" Such a one, for want of a loftier name is called a "Guru " I love to speak of him as the "Beloved "

The greatest discovery of life, to my mind, is the discovery of the Guru You may not discover him until first he has discovered you He will appear to you in answer to the yearning of your heart You will look at him he will look at you he will look *into* you he will read your heart as the pages of an open book. Each will recognise the other the light of recollection will dawn on both "He is the one whom I have sought, year after year, birth after birth!" you will say to yourself And he will say to you—"My child! I have been waiting for you!" And without a question, without a doubt, you will follow him where-ever he lead you,—unto the very ends of the earth, aye even unto hell! For without him heaven itself will appear to you as a desert with him the fires of hell will be as the cooling waters of the Ganges!

I often think of the spiritual way as made up of three steps The first is longing, yearning The seed of longing is implanted in every heart it sprouts at its own time Once it sprouts, it makes the heart restless Often the man feels unhappy, miserable Nothing can bring comfort to him

The wealth of the world, its honour and power are, to him, as ashes and dust. He has seen through the vanity of worldly life. He now longs for God alone, and for someone who may show him the way to God. One mark of his longing is tears. His eyes are filled with tears. He weeps, again and again, and out of the anguish of his lonesome heart cries out — "Where art Thou, Beloved? Hide not Thy Face from me! In separation from Thee, every day is as an age!"

He sets out in quest. This is the second step on the path. He is in search of his Guru. He little knows that the Guru is already in search of him and at the right time will appear to him. "When the disciple is ready," reads a text in an ancient scripture, "the Guru appears."

Then the disciple takes the third step. When the Guru has appeared to him and accepted him as his disciple, he has but one thing to do. It is obedience, implicit, unquestioning obedience is what is asked of every disciple. True obedience is not mechanical. If it is mechanical, it will reduce the disciple to an automation and will make him utterly unfit for the creative life to which he is called. True obedience is an act of the will.

The disciple surrenders his will to the will of the Master. The disciple's will is blended with that of his Master. So is the disciple released from the bondage of the ego, from the clutches of his carnal self, his lower self of pride and desires and appetites. The disciple is liberated. He enters into the life of freedom,—the freedom which belongs to the sons of God. The disciple becomes a child of God. His travel is over. His journey is complete. He has reached the Goal.

The great Masters of humanity have emphasised obedience in the training which they give to their disciples. St. Francis enjoined on all who would enter his Order to

bind themselves to the triple vow of poverty, chastity and obedience When he called upon one of his Brothers to fling at him (St Francis) incriminating words of abuse before a crowd of people, the poor disciple found himself in a quandary out of which there was no escape He had to use severe language against his Master whom he revered and loved more than life itself

A teacher of our days, insisted that whoever would become his disciple must be prepared to offer him unflinching obedience Many years ago, there came to him a man asking to be accepted as a disciple The teacher pointed out to him that to be a disciple was to walk the way of surrender "Surrenderance is very, very difficult," said the teacher "for surrenderance means obedience Are you prepared to obey me in every detail of life?"

"I am prepared always to do as you order," said the man

"And suppose I ask you to cut your child into pieces and bring him to me?"

"I shall readily do that," was the man's answer

"Then let me ask you to do something simpler," said the teacher "Put off your clothes and walk through the streets of this town naked, then come to me"

The man was nonplussed He quietly slunk away and never again showed his face to the Teacher

[3]

Obedience has but one meaning it is to obey I may deliver a hundred harangues on obedience and write as many volumes on the subject but I have not advanced a single step if I have not learnt to obey The way of obedience is the way of surrender,—the way where of the

Gita speaks of in such rapturous terms

One mark of the man who walks the way of surrender is that he rejoices in everything that happens. He not merely *accepts* sorrows and sufferings which come to him but actually *rejoices* in them. For he knows that the Director and the controller of life is God and whatever is ordained by Him is well for him. Such a man, therefore, greets the so-called difficulties and misfortunes of life with open arms and to such a man every "difficulty" becomes as a door to higher life, every "misfortune" leads him on to something better.

What is our condition? If we see some trouble looming in the distance, our legs begin to tremble, our hearts miss a few beats. Immediately we fold our hands and pray to God—"Almighty Lord, rush to our aid! Take this trouble away from us!" If only we knew aright, we would never pray thus, but in faith and child-like trust would exclaim—"Mother Divine, what good dost Thou hide behind this apparent calamity?"

Every prayer is good,—even the prayer which asks that troubles may be removed. But the man of surrender prays in a different way. His prayer is the prayer of Jesus on the Cross—"Father! let not my will but Thy Will be done!" The man of surrender has given himself entirely to God for God to do what He will with him. And God takes him up and makes him an instrument of service, a channel of mercy in this world of suffering and pain.

Such a man is Brother De Paul Kondrak, through whom God has dispensed His mercy to thousands of the poor, starving ones.

Brother De Paul Kondrak saw the pitiable condition of the poor people around him. Many of them were too weak and emaciated to walk and they fell down in the gutters.

He decided to do something for them. In them he saw the living, moving images of His Master.

Brother De Paul had only 25 cents (Rs 2/-) at that time. But he was a man of tremendous faith. One recalls how St Mira's Schools was opened, in 1933, by Dear Dadaji when he had only a two pice coin. Lack of money is no obstacle to a man of faith.

With his 25 cents, Brother De Paul opens a "House of Charity" where he gives free hot meals to the poor, starving ones. To them the "House of Charity" is a dream too good to be true and they don't feel sure if it will last another day. But, day after day, the doors of the "House of Charity" open at the right time and long queues of the poor who wait outside enter in and are served hot food, the like of which they have never tasted before. How they bless Brother De Paul!

Brother De Paul has again and again, run into debts. Another man in his position would have a terribly anxious time. Not so Brother De Paul. He has surrendered his life to God and it is God's responsibility to provide him with all he needs. "The debts are not time," he says with a smile, "the debts are my Master's whose agent I am."

The original "House of Charity" Proved to be too small for the ever-increasing number of guests who come each day. Brother De Paul negotiated for a building worth Rs 1,20,000/- When the documents were ready to be signed, he told the landlord that he did not have even a thousand rupees, yet he asked for the building. The landlord felt scandalised. But after a few moments he said — "I must be mad. Go, take the building and use it in the service of your noble cause."

Once Brother De Paul fell in arrears of the electric bill

A man from the Electric Corporation came to disconnect the supply Brother De Paul went into his inner chamber to pray When he came out, there was a man waiting to give him Rs 250/-, a little more than the amount he wanted to pay the electric bill

Brother De Paul's "House of Charity" is a source of strength and hope to so many who feel utterly lost in this cruel world One day, he saw a man standing on a bridge, staring at the flowing river Brother De Paul felt that the man was contemplating suicide by jumping into the river Brother De Paul spoke to him lovingly, and gathered that the man was on his last legs and had nowhere to turn to Brother De Paul took him to the "House of Charity" and gave him food for his body and soul The man felt strengthened and promised to face the difficulties of life in a brave, heroic spirit

A man came limping to the "House" in the biting cold of winter He had no shoes on his feet When Brother De Paul gave him both food and a pair of shoes, the man felt inexpressibly happy it was as though he had received a million rupees!

The "House of Charity" has never sent away a man without food and the "House" has never been without food at any time "We don't have more than a few days' supply on hand at any one time," says Brother De Paul "We don't always know where food will come from We just know it will come"

Brother De Paul's is a truly dedicated life it is a life of self-surrender So it is that the Brother never talks about himself or his achievements "The Lord does it all," he says "May I continue to be His servant!" The poor people who come to him are the people sent him by God for help He helps them all but is conscious of the fact that he does

not help enough And it is his experience that the more he helps, the more help comes to him and his circle of helpfulness grows ever more wide Above all, he knows that there is but one Helper,—He who with only a few loaves could feed five thousand people by the side of the lake

Brother De Paul serves with a large hand and a generous heart which neither counts nor calculates He knows that God's ways are the ways of abundance He receives showers from God and passes them on to those in need, keeping nothing for himself. His personal expenses during the whole year do not exceed a hundred rupees'

Blessed is the life of Brother De Paul! He has taken his stand in the very heart of the world's conflict and chaos, but is at peace in the heart within For he has no ambition, he only longs to serve suffering humanity In his pure, beautiful life I see verified the Gita's vision of the Lord in the poor and lowly ones

In this agitated confused age, millions of men and women ask — "Is life worth living?" Pointing to the lives of Brother De Paul and others like him we well may answer—"The life of surrender is the life worth living!"

THE SIMPLE WAY

[1]

He was a *bhakta* (devotee) of God. I saw him every day at the evening *satsang* (fellowship meetings). Singing lustily the Name of God. As he sang, tears flowed from his eyes. His Hair were turning grey, but he joined in the *Kirtan* (chanting God's Name) with the fervor and enthusiasm of youth.

He met me, one day, with a look of sadness in his eyes. "What ails thee, O *Bhakta* of God?" I asked.

He answered — "I have with me a guest who is a disciple of a great *yogi*. Last night, as we spoke to each other, my guest asked if I practised *pranayama* (breath-control). On learning that I knew nothing of *pranayama*, he said to me that I had wasted my life in vain and that unless I mastered *pranayama*, I could not advance towards God-realisation. This is what worries me!"

I said to him — "Brother, you do not need to worry. The paths that lead Godward are many. The path followed by your guest is but one,—not the only one. What is essential to his path may not be necessary to yours. You walk your way and let your guest walk his. All ways, all paths, ultimately, lead to Him,—the One without a second!"

I proceeded to tell him that some of the greatest Saints of Humanity,—Sons of Light, Friends of God, did not

practise *Pranayama* "Why," I said to him, "Beloved Dadaji (Sri T L Vaswani) does not do *pranayama* exercises When he was asked if he practised *pranayama*, Dadaji gave a simple answer — 'My *pranayama* is Rama Nama!'"

Pranayama and *asanas* seem to be the fashion nowadays And the idea is gaining popularity that unless a man learns breath-control and is able to sit in particular postures, he cannot grow spiritually Nothing can be far from the truth *Pranayama* and *asanas* have their place in building up a vital, vibrant body, but are not essential to spiritual unfoldment It is not incumbent on the seeker after God to practise breathing exercises his breath will automatically become deep and rhythmical in the measure in which his life becomes pure and his consciousness expands "Purity is yoga!" the words ring in my ears, again and again In these words is summed up the very first lesson which dear Dadaji gave me, many years ago

The great spiritual Teachers of Humanity have never insisted that seekers after God should sit in cumbbersome and unnatural positions They have always recommended that, in hours of silence, seekers should sit in postures which they find natural and easy In our own days, Sri Aurobindo Ghose, one of the leading authorities on *yoga*, did not attach undue importance to *asanas*, *pranayama* or concentration on nerve centres of organs According to him what was essential was the lifting up of the individual's level of consciousness Maharishi Ramana, too, did not regard *yogic asanas* essential to spiritual unfoldment

[2]

Beloved Dadaji was once asked — "What are the obstacles in the way of *yoga* (union with God)?" And he answered that the obstacles were three —

(1) greed of gold, (2) love of pleasure, and (3) lust for

power These three lead a man astray, dragging him into the very abyss of worldliness

The one thing essential to *yoga* is *ekagrata*, one-pointedness of the mind The mind must become steady,—as a flame that flickers not Beautiful are the words of the Gita —

*The yogi true,—
With mind controlled,—
Absorbed in the Eternal,
Is even as a lamp
Burning in a windless place,
With flame which flickers not!*

What disturbs the mind and makes it "flicker" is the wind of worldliness There are lamps enclosed in glass cases they are called "hurricane lanterns" Storms may blow outside they do not touch the flame it continues to burn steady and bright Living in the world, as we do, our minds cannot remain steady without the protecting influence of *sadh-sang*, fellowship with the Pure Ones Blessed among men is he who lives in fellowship with a *satpurkha*, a *satguru*, a *tatwa-darshinah*, a seer of the Secret that is God, a Truth-realised Master Such a one helps the seeker to discipline the mind The mind which wavers, the mind which is unsteady, coming under the purifying influence of a God-realised soul, becomes steady, unflickering Consciously or unconsciously, the seeker is led along the path of *Vasana-tyaga* (renunciation of desire) and *viragya* (detachment) to purification And when the mind is purified, a higher centre wakes up and the seeker no longer doubts he sees, he knows!

The problem of spiritual life is that of finding a *satguru*, a Saint, Master Having found such a one, all we have to do is to surrender ourselves to him—to walk the way of implicit obedience Nothing else is necessary. Neither

pranayama nor *asanas*, neither *pujas* nor *tapas*, neither recitations from scriptures nor elaborate *aratis* are needed. What is needed is loving surrender to the Master. He is the ever-compassionate one. He wakes us up and gives us a lamp by which we may walk in the darkness of this world. He opens up within us reserves of *shakti* (spiritual strength) that we may not be bewitched by the attractions and allurements of *maya* (phenomenal existence). He transmutes our senses and our mind; he purifies and illumines our heart. And holding us by the hand, he leads us on the Path, until the veils are withdrawn, and we behold the Beloved, face to face.

A great Indian Teacher spoke, again and again, of two *margas*, two ways of reaching the Supreme —

(1) The way of self-enquiry. Ask yourself — "Who am I? Whence have I come? Why am I here? Wither am I moving? What is my destiny?" Sitting in silence, entering deeper and deeper within yourself, ask again and again — "What am I? What am I?" Am I only a creature of clay or a bundle of instincts and emotions? or an empirical self of appetites and desires? The answer will come to you from the very depths of your soul — "No, you are something greater than your body, something more than vibrations of matter and ether. You are an out-breathing of the Eternal Spirit. You are of the Imperishable Immortal Atman!" And one day, suddenly, as in a flash, the Secret will be revealed to you. You will behold your true self. You will realise God.

(2) The way of surrender, — surrender to God, surrender to the Guru, the Master, who is the manifested form of God. The seeker surrenders to the Master all he is and all he has, including his problems and perplexities. The way of surrender is the way of *yoga*. He who treads this path will, one day, be united to the Object of his quest, — God.

Himself Significant are the words of Shri Meher Baba — "In sincere surrender to the Master, the disciple comes very near to the stopping of the mind, which is the goal of most *yogic* processes. In obeying the Master at any cost and serving him selflessly, he *nearly* arrives at the culmination of the path of understanding and action. And in loving the Master above everything else, he *becomes* one with the Master as Truth and thus attains Godhood,—the goal of all search and endeavours,—through his grace"

There can be no surrender without love. Love tames the mind and, by focussing all thoughts on the loved one, makes the mind one-pointed. "It is only through love," says Albert Schweitzer, "that we can attain to communion with God"

Hanuman was a lover, a *bhakta*, a devotee of Sri Rama. Hanuman's thoughts were centred in Sri Rama. Hanuman was completely absorbed in Sri Rama. Hanuman was asked which day of the week it was, and he answered — "I know nothing of days and dates. I know nothing of the position of the stars. I but know that Sri Rama is my Beloved and I fain would be lost in him!"

To be lost in the Beloved is to be freed from the clutches of the ego-self, is to enter into the depths within and be illuminated with the radiance of the Spirit. This will not come by reading books and scriptures or by listening to religious discourses. Perhaps, the more of knowledge we have, the farther we are from the Kingdom of God. For book-knowledge makes a man proud and pride, which feeds the sense of "I" - ness, is the one barrier between us and God. "Pride of learning," says the Upanishad, "and attachment for life are the veils which stand between you and the Self. Withdraw the veils and the light of the *Atman* will shine!"

A learned scholar, well-versed in Vedantic lore, asked Sri Ramakrishna — "Can you tell me the difference between knowledge, knower and the object-known?" Sri Ramakrishna smiled, as he answered — "I know not the niceties of learning I only know that the Divine Mother is and that I am Her child!"

When Beloved Dadaji was asked if he knew how old the Earth was, he answered in his characteristic child-like way — "I know not much I only know that the longing in me grows, day by day, to be consumed, more and more, in the Flame of sacrifice to Him whose Beauty blooms in all the worlds and whose Love I see shining, shining, everywhere"

Many years ago, a young Pandit met me at Banaras He had great reverence for Beloved Dadaji and was full of admiration for his educational work dedicated to Saint Mira "Dadaji, I regard as a living embodiment of the Spirit of Mira," he said to me And in the course of his talk, he said — "You must have made a study of Mira's *bhajans* (devotional songs) In them is enshrined a wonderful doctrine of *bhakti* I suppose you know all about the five types of *bhakti* (devotion) concerning which Mira sings so beautifully"

The Pandit was astonished when I told him that I knew nothing of the five types of *bhakti* "Come, I shall teach you," he said "this ignorance is unseemly in one like you, so intimately connected with the Mira Movement in Education"

The Pandit delivered to me a scholarly lecture on the five *bhavas* (attitudes) of *bhakti*,—*santa*, *dasya*, *sakhya*, *vatsalya* and *madhura* I listened to him in patience When his talk was over, he asked me what I thought of it all In answer

I gave him the lines of a song —

*Into a garden a goldsmith came
and stood beside a rose-bush
He wished to test the purity of flowers
By rubbing them on his touch-stone!*

"How far can knowledge lead you?" Sri Ramakrishna asked, and answered — "Knowledge can take you, as best, to the outer court of God. If you would enter into His inner chamber, be drenched in love!" "Love," he said, "is the divine path meant specially for the age in which we live"

The way of love is the simple way He who would walk the way of love need study no scripture save the scripture of the Heart. One very page of this scripture is inscribed in letters of light the Name of the Beloved He who would walk the way of love need not torment his body nor practise exercises in breath-control nor travel to places of pilgrimage far-off The pilgrim of the way of love lives and moves and has his breath in the One Beloved The Beloved is our constant Companion, our inseparable Friend He is not afar He is within us,—in the shrine of the Heart,— and He is all around us,— in every creature and every object, in every atom of an atom., in every ray of light, in every orb and circle and round of evolution We do not need to go out in search of Him to temples or mosques or churches We have but to stand where we are we have but to be still and know our God. This thought is beautifully sung by a *bhakta* —

*I do not need to travel
To Mecca or to Medina
My Mathura and my Kashi
Are at the Lotus-feet of the Lord!
And He is my Beloved*

*He is ever by my side!
To be apart from Him
Even for a brief while
Would be to turn mad
For the love for Him!*

*The pomp of rituals is meaningless to me.
My worship is the simple adoration of love
I offer the Beloved in the shrine within!
And each day, to me, is holy, holy, holy!
For each day I commune with the Beloved!*

[5]

The pilgrim of the simple way of love aspires to purification and enrichment of his interior life. Outer things,—rites, ceremonies, creeds,—are of no value to him. So when a *bhakta* of God was asked why he did not wear the ochre robe of the *sanyasin* (the man of renunciation), he answered

*If detachment dwells not within,
Of What use is the robe of renunciation?
Will fruit become sweet and ripe
If its skin is painted red?*

The emphasis in the simple way is on inner renunciation, inner detachment. Live in the midst of the world but be not stained by worldliness. Live for God! Live with God! Live in God! The poor and needy, the lowly and lonely ones are His *rupas*, His forms, His broken images. Give them the service of love. To serve them is, indeed, to worship the Lord. Of this simple way sings Kabir in many of his moving songs. Here is one

*I shut not my eyes
I close not my ears.
I torment not my body*

*I do but sing His Holy Name,—
The Beloved!
With eyes wide open
I see and smile
Everywhere I behold
His beauty and loveliness,—
The beloved!
Every path I tread
Is a path of pilgrimage
On which I move to greet
The Beloved!
Whether I stand or sit,
I forget Him not!
In my ears doth beat
The rhythm of His music,—
The Beloved!
Every work I do
Is an act of service pure,
Dedicated unto Him,—
The Beloved!*

He who has dedicated his life unto the Beloved asks for nothing, claims nothing. He but aspires that in love and devotion he may grow from more to more. He has seen through the vanities of the world they cannot tempt him. He knows that the wealth of kings and emperors, the fame of film stars, the power of dictators are ashes and dust. The true treasures are the treasures of faith, devotion, love, wisdom, beauty, holiness. So Narada prayed, again and again —

*So bless me, Lord!
That the attractions and allurements
of the world-bewitching maya
May touch me not!
And that I may grow,*

*From more to more,
In love and devotion
To Thy Lotus-feet'*

When Prahlada was asked by the Lord — "What boon would you have, My child?" he answered — "Tempt me not thus, O Lord! A *bhakta* (devotee) is not a trader in boons!" When the Lord insisted that Prahlada ask for something, he said — "Then grant me this, O Lord! That the longing for Thee may grow from more to more within me, and that in all conditions and circumstances of life I may not lose sight of Thee! "

[6]

The pilgrim of the simple way has this one aspiration,— not to lose sight of the Beloved in the midst of the vicissitudes of life To walk the simple way is to live and move and have one's being in the One Beloved For this we need neither art nor science We simply go to Him as we are, without pretensions, without striking a pose We go to Him singing in our aspiring hearts the simple song —

*Beloved!
I come to Thee
As I am,—
Filled with faults and frailties,
And thus I know,
Without a shadow of doubt,
That I am Thine,
Completely Thine,
Thine and Thine alone!
Accept me as I am,
And breathe into me,
Love for Thee
And love for thy broken ones'*

The pilgrim of the simple way moves along the pathways of life, singing as he goes All around him, he spreads the sunshine of joy He wishes well to all. He harms none he fears none he hates none To all he gives the love of his pure, radiant heart And on his face is the smile which seems to declare —

"God is great, and all is well with the world"

The following may be found helpful by some of us who aspire to walk the simple way —

1 Repeat the Name of God, again and again Repeat the Name as you sit in the bus or the train on your way to the office, or as you work in the kitchen, or as you take your evening walk, or as you sit by the seaside and gaze at the midnight moon Repeat the Name as often as you can Repeat the Name with love and longing in your heart, with tears in your eyes

Take care to see that the repetition does not become mechanical "Can a mere name achieve anything," asked Sri Ramakrishna, "without the yearning love of the devotee behind it? One should feel great restlessness of soul for the vision of God Suppose a man repeats the name of God mechanically while his mind is absorbed in 'Woman and gold' Can he achieve anything? Chant the name of God and with it pray that you may have love for Him"

2 Engage yourself in humble and affectionate converse with God Entering into the heart within, speak lovingly to the Beloved For this nor previous preparation is necessary Trust the impulse of the heart Out of it will arise aspirations rich in loving adoration — "Lord, I am wholly Thine!" "I need Thee Lord!" "Beloved! keep me not apart from Thee make me Thou a part of Thee!" "Lord, take the wanderer home!" "I thank Thee, Lord!" "I love Thee, Lord!" "I have need of Thee, Beloved!" "Keep me in

Thy service strong!" This will keep the mind fixed on God
Do not let the mind wander As soon as it goes astray, pull
it back to God

3 Establish more and more points of contact with God
This will give you soul-rest And out of your joy will flow
to many a weary pilgrim on the Path Be gentle with all
who come to you they have been sent by God to your
door, not without a purpose There was a time when if, in
the midst of work, some one came and disturbed me, I felt
upset Thereby, I did harm only to myself Now I try to
accept every interruption as His appointment And I know
how light and happy feels the heart that rejoices in the
will of God

4 He who loves God fears to do anything which may
displease God So he strives to grow, from more to more,
in purity of thought, word and deed And if, perchance,
deliberately or otherwise, he departs from the light and
thinks, says or does something wrong, he will not hesitate
in asking for forgiveness

5 Whatever we do,—be it a lowly act such as sweeping
a room or a noble deed such as saving a life,—let us do it
wholly for the love of God "Whatever you eat, whatever
you offer, whatever you give away in charity, whatever
you do,—do it, O, Arjuna! as an offering to Me!" says Sri
Krishna in the Gita Can there be a simpler way of
communing with the Lord than this that we offer unto
Him every little thing we do, every thought we think,
every word we utter, every aspiration we breathe?

6 Gradually, the pilgrim of the simple way arrives at
a state in which it will become natural and easy for him
to renounce for the love of God all that is not God Then
for him the world consists only of two,—he and his God
At times, he thinks of God as his Father-Mother and, in the

true child-like spirit, he goes up to Him for every little thing he needs. At times he thinks of God as his Friend; he opens out his heart to Him in intimate companionship; he plays with Him and goes out for walks with Him. At other times he thinks of Him as his Teacher and approaches Him with his doubts and difficulties. At yet other times he thinks of Him as Master and Lord and offers Him the willing obedience of a servant. At times he thinks of him as his Beloved, the Spouse of his soul, and gazes and gazes and continues to gaze at His beauteous face, full of tender grace. All the time,—even in the midst of his daily occupations,—he thinks of Him, he communes with Him, driving out from his mind all that is not God.

The pilgrim of the simple way, the true *bhakta*, is even like the lotus. Silently it blooms; silently it spreads its fragrance; silently it grows in beauty. Its face is ever turned towards God. So, too, in the shouts and shows of life, in the midst of the madding crowds of men, in all the changes of this changing world, the *bhakta* is not disturbed. His heart is ever at peace,—still as the waters of lake on a calm day. He grows in beauty; he grows in blessedness. He is a lover of silence. He speaks not much; and whenever he opens his mouth, he speaks to help and heal. Every limb of his body, every drop of his blood sings the song of dedicated life — “My God and my all!” He has nothing he can lose. He has only God; and nothing,—poverty, pain, misery, misfortune, old age, disgrace, disease, even death,—can take God away from him.

GLAD SURPRISES

The other day, I was agreeably surprised to see a friend who had been, for some years, an invalid confined to bed. He was a heart-patient and also suffered from acute attacks of rheumatism. He had despaired of getting well and prepared himself to face a slow and tortuous end.

Imagine my astonishment when I saw him in fine fettle! He was the very picture of health and happiness. In his eyes shone the light of peace which belongs to those who have merged their heart and mind and will in the beloved. My friend had motored all the way from Secunderabad-Deccan,— a distance of some hundred miles. He had thoroughly enjoyed the trip and proposed to visit a number of places in Northern India before taking the return trip home.

In his illness, he told me, he had consulted many doctors,— some of whom were specialists. He had freely spent money of which he had an abundant store but his condition continued to grow from bad to worse. He believed in prayer. He prayed to God, again and again,— prayed for health and healing,— but all in vain. His health continued to deteriorate until he was reduced to a bag of bones.

Then, one day, a feeling came over him to give up the wild chase which seemed to lead nowhere. He gave up consulting doctors. He stopped taking drugs. He ceased to pray for health and resolved to ask God for no material

thing or gain, but only for His love "Thy Love alone I seek, O Beloved of this broken, afflicted heart!" he cried again Again As he cried, there were tears in his eyes

His prayer was soon answered God revealed His Love to him and, in a sudden flash, he saw that in all that happened was the loving Hand of God The pains from which he suffered, the bodily agony he experienced, day after day, all were according to the plan of God It was the Plan of One who loved all humanity, all creation, with a love boundless as the ocean

This revelation filled him with such wondrous joy that rather than regain health and lose his newly-found experience, he preferred to remain in his new state with a bed-ridden body In a matter of days, however, he became well again, and soon regained his lost health and strength Now he goes about, from place to place, asking all who meet him to seek God for no material profit but solely for His Love

"Come unto me" says Sri Krishna, "and you will be a direct charge on me Your burdens will be My burdens and your joys will be My joys" And did not Jesus say — "Seek ye the Kingdom of God and all things shall be added unto you"?

Alas! we seek the goods of the earth The more we run after them, the more they run away from us If, sometimes, we outrun them and succeed in grasping what we seek, we find that they do not give us the joy and peace our lonely hearts need

As I look back over the years which are no more, what do I find? I have been in pursuit of one shadow after another Shadows! Shadows! The world is running after shadows! Earthly beauty, which captivates many a heart and throws over it a veil of darkness, is a shadow Power

which intoxicates many a noble soul is a shadow Silver and gold are shadows Pomp and luxury are shadows Pleasure and prosperity are shadows Honour and greatness are shadows They will not give us the peace we seek.

Peace will not come to us by running after the things which the Earth gives and the Earth takes away Peace will not come to us by fighting circumstances and struggling against so-called difficulties and misfortunes Peace will come to us when we ourselves enter into the Great Peace of God To enter into the Peace of God is to relax and stand still— to stand where you are

With flashing sword in his hand, Angulimala, the robber, ran after the Buddha The robber ran as fast as he could, but the Buddha eluded him Then, from a distance, Angulimala cried out — "Stand still, O hermit! Stand still" Quick came the simple, significant answer of the Buddha — "I am still May you be still !"

When the two met each other, the Blessed One explained to Angulimala what it was to stand still The words of the Master entered into the heart of the robber and he was converted, transformed The robber became a disciple and his heart became tranquil as the surface of a lake on a clear, windless day

Our age is an age of activity We are busy,— and often, I am afraid, fussy We like to be up and doing but our doing is distractions, is destruction So we are not at peace with our neighbours,— nor with ourselves We need to stand still!

Years ago, when I was at Karachi, I was filled with a keen desire to learn swimming I was taken to the "Native Jetty" where an expert explained to me the technique of swimming I entered the waters I began to struggle in the

waters The more I struggled the more I sank I thanked my lucky stars that I had not ventured beyond my depths I continued to struggle and in the attempt felt exhausted my efforts led me nowhere Then my kind instructor came to me and said — "My boy! do not struggle Let the waters carry you! Give yourself up to the waters!" I did so I surrendered myself on the surface of the waters What a delightful experience it was!

In the ocean of life, we struggle all the time We battle against circumstances we strive against misfortunes Alas! we don't give ourselves up to the waters We do not accept the will of God!

To accept the will of God is to know that we are nothing, that He is the one Worker and that, therefore, in all that happens is our good The more we grow into this realisation, the more relaxed we shall feel and we shall gradually know what it is to become perfectly still in God

There was a rich businessman who traded in cotton He had huge godowns filled with cotton One day, as he sits in his office doing his daily work, an assistant rushes into his room trembling from head to foot. "Sire!" he blurts out, "a great calamity has befallen us All our godowns have been burnt to ashes Here is the telegram, just received"

The businessman reads the telegram He closes his eyes for a brief moment, then says — "Gratitude to Thee, O Lord! Great are Thy mercies and they endure for ever!"

So saying, he quietly resumes his work, as though nothing has happened The assistant is dumbfounded at this attitude of supreme indifference in the face of dire calamity Those were days when insurance companies were not known and a fire meant loss of millions of rupees

After the lapse of an hour, the assistant comes again to his master. This time the face of the assistant is wreathed in smiles. He says — "Sire! we have just heard from the telegraph office that the telegram was delivered to us by mistake. It was meant for someone else. Thank God, all our godowns are safe!"

Once again, the businessman closes his eyes for a brief moment, then says — "Gratitude to Thee, O Lord! Great are Thy mercies and they endure for ever."

This businessman knew what it was to be "still in God." It is not as easy as it may appear to be. But it will come to us as we grow into the realisation that we are not doing anything at all, that we can do nothing on our own, that not even a leaf can stir except if it be His will.

In the beginning perhaps, it may be helpful for us to do the following.—

1 Every morning, as we wake up, let us think of some *sutra* (small text) from the Sacred Books and repeat it to ourselves, again and again. As the day advances and we find ourselves in the midst of work, let us, from time to time, detach ourselves from our work for a brief minute of two and repeat the *sutra*. As we do so, let us, from time to time, detach ourselves from our work. As we do so, let us imagine that the *sutra* permeates into our entire being and renews us physically, mentally, spiritually. Any *sutra* will do. I have found the following very helpful — "Thy will be done, O Lord!" "Thou knowest best what is good for each one of us!" "Thy works are the works of mercy!" "The Lord is my Strength, my Support and Stay!" "In Thy will is the peace I seek!"

2 In the face of difficulty and disaster, do not feel confused. But lift up your hearts to Him and think of Him as a Loving Mother and of yourself as a little child sitting

in Her Lap Then sing to yourself a song such as the following —

O Mother Mine!

O Mother Divine!

He on whom is Thy protecting Hand,—

Him no sorrow can strike

And no tribulation trouble!

3 Steer yourself clear of all thoughts of lust, hatred and greed They stimulate the lower self and lead to excitement which will not let us be still in God

Gradually, this stillness will deepen, though the very first experience of it gives such immense joy that it cannot be expressed in words The stillness will grow more and more intense until, one blessed day, we shall be completely absorbed in God and entirely at one with His divine will which is perfect,— not only for us but for all men and birds and beasts, perfect for all creation

This is the goal of our life's journey It may not be reached in a single leap There are stages on the way Every stage is both good and necessary Every stage has its lesson to teach As we learn the lesson of one stage, we are being prepared for the next So, from stage to stage, we move on, knowing that where we are, is at the moment, just the right place for us

Each one of us infinitely dear to the Heart of God He is leading each one of us along the way which is best for us He sees what we cannot see He knows what we cannot know And every experience He sends us,— be it sweet or bitter,— is meant to enrich our inner life We must not shun it we must not avoid it But we must accept it as a gift from Him who, not unoften, startles us by many a glad surprise

THE FAITH OF A BLIND WOMAN

With a few of his friends, Anjali sat out in the open, beneath the canopy of twinkling stars. He spoke to them of the love of God and of His mercies which endure from everlasting to everlasting.

"In all that happens," he said, "behold ye the Hand of God, the Ever-gracious mother of us all. In suffering and defeat, as in joy and triumph, greet the Light of the Mother's mercy. Suffering, then, will cease to sting and victory will not make you vain."

A woman happened to pass by. Agony was writ on her emaciated face. Deep sorrow sat heavy upon her heart. She heard Anjali's words. She said to him — "It is easy for you to speak thus. The sting of suffering is known alone to them, who, like me, suffer day after day. You talk of God and the Light of God's mercy. Alas! it is a dark world in which we live — a world where the wicked flourish and the righteous endure the agony of hell!"

Anjali looked up at her. In her arms she carried a baby. Anjali said to her — "Drop the baby upon the floor! Drop him!"

Taken aback, the woman exclaimed — "What a strange man you are! How shall I drop my child upon the floor? He will be killed!"

Anjali asked — "Will you do it for a thousand rupees?"

"Not for as many pieces of gold as there are stars in the skies above!" the woman answered

"Are you sure you will not drop the baby even if you are offered a kingdom?"

"Sure as the moon doth shine behind yon tree, I shall not drop him for anything He is more precious to me than all the wealth of the world " So saying, she hugged the baby to her bosom

Then said Anjali — "Mother, do you think you love your children more than the Lord does His?"

The woman understood her face became radiant with the light of a new realisation "If the Lord really loves us, why is there so much of suffering in the world?" she asked

Anjali said — "Suffering has its place in the Divine Plan When your child falls ill, you force him to swallow bitter medicine you pay no heed to his cries and tears Our souls are sick, and God, the Divine Mother, sends us the bitter pill of suffering and pain Do not run away from suffering Do not seek to escape it but accept it in the right spirit It is an experience which will enrich your life and strengthen your soul It will polish the mirror of your heart and, looking therein, you will behold the beauteous Face of the Lord And then you will know that there is a meaning of mercy in all that happens For all is well, a hundred times well,— both today and a thousand years hence Do not ask God to remove suffering, but ask Him for the blessing which may make you His true child!"

Someone asked — "Tell us, Anjali! if in real life you have ever come across a person who has trodden the way of which you speak to us in such rapturous words

Anjali paused for a few moments, then said —

Years ago, I happened to cross a village, I entered a dilapidated hut. An old woman sat on the floor. She was an invalid and she was blind. She lived in the midst of abject poverty.

Finding her in that miserable state and with no one near her, I said to her:— "Mother! you must be feeling very lonely."

"Not at all!" she answered in a voice which still rings in my ears. "The neighbours love me and do all that is necessary for me."

"But at night, Mother! how do you live all along with the storm shrieking and the rain pouring through the leaky roof?" I asked in wonder.

And again she said — "I do not feel lonely. My heart feels happy, alike in sunshine and in rain. The good neighbours give me all I want and my wants are so few."

There was something in her words which made me feel that this poor, blind woman was in possession of some hidden secret of happiness. I sat at her feet. I gazed at her innocent, illumined face. I put to her question after question in the hope that she would share with me her secret. At last, she said — "I do not feel lonely, for the Beloved is ever by me. In the dark of the night, when the others are asleep, I call Him and He comes to me. With noiseless footfall He comes, He comes, He ever comes. I speak to Him. He speaks to me. Having Him, I need nothing, nothing, nothing! He is everything! He is All-in-all and He is the one-in-all!"

I listened and I bowed to pick up the dust of her feet. My eyes were touched with tears. My voice was choked.

with emotion. I knew that here was one to whom God was the One Living Reality

"Whatever is for my good," she said, "God sends me and whatever comes to me, comes from God for my good!" "There can be no true happiness without God," She added "His will is our peace, and the more we are attuned to His will, the more will spiritual joy saturate our souls!"

The poor, old blind woman was a true lover of God She lived and moved in the presence of God,— her Beloved "He never leaves me," she said; "He never forsakes me And I trust in Him as a child trusts its mother!" So was she freed from the fever and fret of life Freed from fear and lust and anger, freed from all sense of I-ness, she had found her Home in the Beloved

ON A NEW YEAR'S EVE

It was the New Year's Eve As I viewed the departing year in retrospect, there passed before me a whole procession of faults and failings, of things left undone which should have been done and of acts performed which were best left alone

The day came as a reproach and, also, as a reminder, O pilgrim to the Nameless! thou art moving on,— but whither? Far, far away from the Path hast thou strayed How long wilt thou live in forgetfulness? How long wilt thou gamble away thy soul for trifles of earthly pleasure and honour? Arise! Awake! And follow the Light!

I spent the day in "remembrance" and "recollection" When evening came, a wondrous calm filled my heart I little knew what lay in store for me

It was about nine o'clock in the night A few of us sat together, we were all kindred souls We spoke to each other gently, softly, even as the moonbeams speak to lilies in a lake And then something happened

Over a slight matter there was a difference of opinion It led to a hot discussion between me and one whom I hold in high esteem. The pitch of our voice kept on rising I felt I was right he felt he was right Out of a conflict of right with right cometh tragedy After some minutes of wordy exchange, as we took leave of each other, my friend

felt miserable and I felt unhappy

Just then some one spoke to me with the simple frankness of a happy child Though she spoke out of the tenderness of her heart, every word she uttered was a whip "You write such beautiful things," she said to me, "and in your conversation with friends and others you give expression to such wondrous things of the Spirit How often have you not urged that compassion is the secret of true life? And yet, as you spoke now to a brother, you became loveless! The tone of your voice was as the hissing of a snake and your words burnt as live coal!"

"How true," I said to myself And in sheer shame, I hung low my head

In silence I asked myself — "Why did I use harsh words? Why?" And the answer came — "Because my life is not yet rooted in love The roots of my life are elsewhere Let me take care of my roots Life is the root, words are as flowers and action is the fruit If we are not rooted in love, our words go wild and our work more often than not becomes a curse"

That night I kept awake I sat in my quiet room, shedding unbidden tears of repentance And then, methinks, I heard a Voice say — "My child! weep not, nor be disheartened But pray for light and strength to walk whither the light may lead!"

And I said — "You know the burden that sits heavy on my heart. Tell me what I may do!"

And the Voice said — "My child! let silence be the law of your life for silence hurts no one When you feel like breaking your silence, ask yourself if what you have to say is something better than silence If so, say it: else remain silent!"

I felt like asking a question But before I opened my lips, I said to myself — "Surely, my question is not better than silence so let me be silent!"

The Voice continued —

"If only we could collect the words each one of us speaks, what a huge mountain they would make! Himalayas of words have passed through these tiny lips All these words come under five categories —

(1) Words inspired by love of God These are the words we utter in adoration of the Eternal,— the cry of the soul to the Oversoul, the songs sung in praise of the Most High, prayer, *kirtan* and *jap* of the Sacred Name

(2) Words inspired by love of fellow-men These are the words of comfort and consolation we pass on to those who suffer and struggle and are in sorrow,— words which cheer them on life's lonesome way

(3) Words which wound and hurt and kill These are the words inspired by jealousy, envy, anger, malice or hatred How often do we not speak ill of others, little knowing what havoc we cause! An archer shoots to kill More dangerous is the man with a forked tongue Every time he opens his lips, he sends forth shafts which strike and sting

(4) Words inspired by self-love These are the words prompted by egoism, by greed and sensuality How often do we not 'brag' about our so-called 'achievements' or speak in self-righteous pride! And see, how happy men feel when they indulge in obscene and sensual talk! When it comes to making a little material again, men, alas! have no hesitation in speaking an untruth They gain a little and lose their all

(5) Idle words These are the words men utter without rhyme or reason, merely to while away their time The conversations of men are filled with silly questions and imbecile answers, which make our homes centres of idle gossip and our clubs and meeting-places so many towers of babel Against this type of talk did Jesus warn, when he said — 'But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof, in the day of judgment'

I listened in rapt attention And the Voice continued —

"When you purchase an earthen-vessel, you strike it and, from the sound, make out if it is cracked or not So, too, is the integrity of man proved by his speech If the words a man utters belong to the first two classes, verily, is he blessed among mortals Such an one spreads sunshine wherever he goes'

"The world, alas' is over-populated with men whose words fall under the last three groups Such men carry their "hell" with themselves and their lives are dark as dungeons"

And I said — "I have often noticed that in speaking the truth, I have to be unpleasant In such cases, should I refrain from telling the truth for fear of hurting the feelings of another?"

And the Voice spake —

"Speak the truth, by all means but let your truth not be bitter Let the truth you speak be sweet as Truth ever is sweet For the Truth of truth is Love And he whose heart is loveless may feel he speaks the truth though, in reality, what he speaks is no better than arrogance Truth is not truth if it springeth not out of love For love is truth and truth is love and the twain are one'

"Love alone has the eyes to see truth If you come across a large—hearted man, say to him by all means that in his eyes you behold the Light of God,— the Great Giver of all that is But if you meet a miser, tell him not that he is a hoarder of ill-gotten wealth, but say to him — "Brother! the Lord bless thee with increasing abundance that thou mayst take greater care of the poor and starving ones!"

"Above all, remember, that your words should be brief for only brief words live long in human hearts "

And I said — "Give me a few simple rules which I may bear in mind to keep away from all unrestrained and indiscriminate talk."

And the Voice said —

"I give unto you three simple rules —

(1) Speak little or not at all And when you open your lips speak only of God or to render service to those in need

(2) Keep clear of all debate and discussion And in your talk, be humble and gentle and meddle not with other people's affairs When you find you are being dragged into a controversy, repeat the magic formula — "I am wrong the other is right!"

(3) Keep your mind and tongue occupied in repeating *Nama*,— the Name of God Repeat the Holy Name by day and by night, until you enter into the Name and lose yourself in it And losing yourself, you will discover the way that leadeth to the Hidden Cave where sings and sings and still doth sing the unstruck music of the depths Deeper still must you go,— deeper than all sounds,— to the very Heart of your heart where you may be alone with the Alone, the Ancient One, the One and only

Beloved!"

And I said — "Speak to me of how I may utter the
Name of the Beloved and be in It completely absorbed"

And the Voice spake — "One only secret let me reveal
to you this day Before the voice can utter the Beloved's
Name, it must lose the power to wound"

I got up I felt refreshed,— and happy as a songbird
And I sang -

*Brief is thy life, O child of man,
Brief as the song of a flute!
Pour into thy life the music of service
That it may become a healing and a balm
To every broken, bleeding heart!*

*Brief is thy life, O child of man,—
Brief as the candle which is out
Before the dawn doth break!
Make thy life beautiful and bright
With the radiance of His Holy Name!*

*Sing His Name, O sing His Name
With the voice of silence in thy tongue!
Who sings the Name and serves the poor
Doth abide fore'er in Eternal Love!*

"THIS, TOO, IS FOR MY GOOD!"

(1)

She was a sweet child of God. She had been bedridden for many months. At times her pain became almost unbearable. It was so excruciating that, she told me once, were it not for her faith in God, she would want to shoot herself. But there was always a beautiful smile on her face. And out of her parted lips the words came, again and again — "O Lord, this, too, is for my good! Blessed be Thy Name!"

It was my privilege to be of some little service to her, from time to time. She bore all sufferings in the true heroic spirit. She was a girl of deep abiding faith in God. Many came to her for blessings; she blessed them all. She prayed for them, for she believed profoundly in the power of prayer.

I found her, one day, in the throes of physical agony. I said to her — "Sister, why do you not pray to God to cure you? He will surely answer your prayers!"

And she said to me that there were three important reasons why she had never asked God to cure her —

1. God is Love, all-loving Love. He will never send us pain unless it be for our good. "Physical and other maladies," she said to me, "are not without a purpose

They come to teach us lesson we need to grow in the Life Divine When these lessons are learnt in full, the afflictions fall of themselves " "One of the lessons I am learning in this illness," she added, "is that it is body that suffers I am not the body The body is but a garment I have put on to fulfil the Plan God has meant for me What I am, in essence, may not be touched by physical affliction or mental suffering I am of the *Atman* whom, as Sri Krishna says in the Gita, weapons cannot cleave, fire cannot burn, waters cannot wet, and wind cannot dry away "

2 The seeker after God should aspire to do God's will and not even dream of asking God to do his will "If it be God's will that I suffer bodily pain," she said, "then I should not wish to be well If God wills anything for me, it is because He loves me and if I desire that God should not will it for me, it means that I do not want God to love me Better were it for me to burn in the fires of hell and be loved by God than that I should enjoy the pleasures of heaven and be far from His love His love is all that matters And when I know that He loves me, the pain He sends becomes sweet " I understood why, in spite of the excruciating pain, there always played a sweet smile on her radiant face

3 "To ask God for anything short of Himself appears childish to me," she said "When in prayer, I go to God, I can never ask Him for any worldly favour or comfort I ask Him to give me the gift of Himself When He is mine, all that He has is already mine I have no need of anything " She gave me the parable of a man who walked four hundred miles through forests and fields Over hills and dales, and, at last, reached the palace of a king When the king learnt of the ordeals through which this man had passed to reach him, the king said — "Tell me what you want Ask and it shall be given ye" The man simply answered — "I want a beautiful dress and a shining shoe"

The courtiers, who were present, called the man a great fool We, too, laugh at this man in superior disdain yet are we any better? Again and again, we stand in the presence of the King of kings and pray for some earthly good,— some passing pleasure, a little power, or a little of the yellow dust men call gold! The whole world, with all its wealth and comfort and honour and glory, is no better than “a beautiful dress and a shining shoe” compared to the gifts of the Spirit which God giveth to His loved ones

[2]

Suffering is of two types —

1 There is the suffering we create for ourselves through violation of the laws of life,— through impure thinking and wrong feelings, through wild imagination and unbalanced emotion, through harmful habits and unhealthy desires, and through a wrong use of our energies and powers to unworthy ends Such suffering serves no useful purpose Such suffering can,— and should,— be avoided by bringing our thought, will and imagination under control and by directing our energies to the fulfilment of life's true purpose on earth

So many of us go out of our way to create unnecessary suffering for ourselves The cause of most of our sufferings is that we cry over spilt milk, we worry over things which have already happened and for which nothing can be done, we let this worry spoil our present and we look with fear to an unknown future

Fear of the future makes us imagine all sorts of horrible things I know of a girl who, for many months, lived in mortal fear of a dread disease which she thought would soon overtake her Her parents argued with her eminent doctors examined her carefully and pronounced the

verdict that there was no chance of her being attacked disease All to no avail! Every moment of her life she lived in fear She could not eat she could not work. she lost all interest in life Her suffering was terrible,— until she met Beloved Dadaji (Sri T L Vaswani) He spoke to her lovingly He let her open out her mind to him He asked her to abandon all fear and, in its place, cultivate child-like trust in God, who is the loving Father-Mother of us all

“In Thee I trust! To Thee I surrender myself” When we grow in this attitude, we are freed from fear of the future and are saved much needless suffering The future is not in our hands We may not have a future at all Or, when it actually comes, it may be so different from what we imagine it to be The future has been concealed from us by a loving Providence Why probe into what God chooses to hide from us? To do so is to invite suffering For, bitter is the fruit of man’s wisdom Let us trust without seeing Let us live without trying to unveil that which has been veiled to our sight Let us build our life in the words of Jesus which have a deeper practical significance than most of us may know — “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof”

2 The second type of suffering is that which comes to us from God It is not the result of the violation of the laws of life It comes to the best of men, to the noblest of souls It came to Krishna and Christ, to Buddha and Zoroaster, to Moses and Muhammad, to Nanak and Kabir, to Mansoor and Mira,— to all lovers of God and Man

This type of suffering does not come alone it brings the strength which endures, the comfort which lends sweetness to suffering This is what distinguishes it from suffering of the first type Unaccompanied, as it is, by the soothing touch of God, the suffering which man creates

for himself becomes hard and unbearable it breaks down his spirits and throws him into an abyss of grief down and despair

The suffering which comes to us from God is for our good but we do not understand this until we have cast all thought of self aside When the self is thrown off, then and only then do we behold the loving Hand of God in every circumstance and situation of life

Everything that happens works for our good The seeming cruelty and injustice of men, their selfishness and ruthless disregard of values we hold dear, are seen to be the results of God's infinite goodness and unfailing love

[3]

Whom God loves, He makes him suffer pain and loss for His sake Whoever would be chosen of God must gladly submit to a process of purification He must be prepared to pass through the fire of suffering he must be purified as thrice— burnished gold He must be found worthy of facing trials and tribulations, of courting dishonour and disgrace for the love of God In a passage of great beauty, the beloved poet of Sind, Shah Abdul Latif, says — "I have known of no one who met the Beloved in happiness" The Law of Love is the Law of the Cross, the Law of Sacrifice Shah Latif sings —

*They who embrace the Cross
And surrender their life-breath,—
To them is given the vision of God'*

To the seeker after God difficulties and dangers, trials and temptations come in an endless procession He does not shun them he is not anxious to avoid them

The man who tries to escape trouble finds himself,

sooner or later in more serious trouble is to accept it, make it a part of one's life For no trial comes to us without a purpose Every trial is a teacher (Guru) it has some lesson or the other to teach Significant are the words in a Baul Song — "By what path comest thou, Guru? The mystery I cannot solve" And again —

The welcome you receive is your Guru!

The agony inflicted on you is your Guru!

Every hammer-blow on your hearts is your Guru!

What makes you shed tears is your Guru!

Each one of us has so many lessons to learn,— lessons which differ from individual to individual The lessons meant for me are not the lessons meant for you Therefore the trials God sends me are different from the trials He sends you

Trials must be resisted To resist is to make strong Do not resist trials, but welcome them Everything that we welcome is transformed Suffering is transformed into love This is the great mystery of life

Physical pain, mental agony, spiritual anguish,— nothing lasts for ever Everything lasts for as long as it has its work to do When it has completed its task, it falls away like the dead, dry leaves of autumn.

Many are the problems and perplexities that a pilgrim has to face, as he treads the Path He knows that every one of them is necessary So he does not complain But he accepts each difficulty as it comes, makes it a part of his life, is enriched by it and moves on one step nearer the goal

There are periods when a pilgrim finds himself surrounded by utter darkness At such times, he finds it difficult to welcome trials and temptations with enthusiasm but in no case does he avoid them Deep

within him is the faith that though the situation be exasperating enough, if only he can be patient and trusting, God will come and lead him by the hand out of danger into security, out of defeat into victory, out of darkness into Light!"

[4]

The one practical way to meet a difficult situation is to walk right up to it, to look it in the face with courage and determination, and with the prayer — "So help me, God!" It is only when we are unwilling to meet a difficulty or are afraid to face it that it gets the better of us. When, trusting in God, we go forward to meet it, as we would meet a friend, the impossible happens. What was thought to be a trial, what appeared to be a source of danger and difficulty, is seen to be a blessing in disguise.

My thoughts go back to an incident which occurred in the days of my boyhood. It was a small incident, to all appearances, but it taught me a lesson which I have not forgotten. It was the year 1925. I was a student in a Primary School. A private tutor taught me English at Home. I asked a friend to give me a story book (in English), and he promised to bring it on the Holi Day. With eyes of shining expectation, I looked forward to get the book. A knock was heard on the door. I eagerly moved forward to open it. The sight which greeted me struck me with terror. There stood before me a boy with the fearful face of a lion. I screamed and ran back. Out of the lion's mouth issued words in a sweet, familiar voice — "Be not afraid! 'Tis I, Govind, thy dear friend! I have brought for thee the promised story book."

Immediately, all fear vanished. I began to laugh. I moved forward to embrace my friend. I touched his face and found it covered with a mask of cardboard. The fearful

"lion's face" dropped down at a single touch, and my dear friend's face stood revealed in all its beauty and loveliness. Ever since, I have tried to look at difficulties and dangers, trials and temptations, as friends who come to me with fearful masks, but who always bring rich blessings.

Meet every difficulty bravely. Do not try to avoid it. You will find that difficulties are gifts which God sends us for the enrichment of our interior life. 'He is the Lord of Compassion and Love and His works are ever the works of mercy. If only we trust Him and surrender ourselves to Him, asking Him to lead us wherever He will, fearing nothing, avoiding nothing, but rejoicing in all that He sends us, no harm can ever happen to us. And through every circumstance and situation in life will flow to us the Love, the Joy and the Peace of God.

We must always find some reason or the other for which to feel thankful of God. If there is one thing which God loves, it is an humble, thankful heart. Even in the darkest hours of life, if only we turn around, we shall not fail to find something for which we should feel thankful to God.

A friend of mine lost an eye in an accident. He was taken to a hospital. Several friends visited him in the hospital to sympathise with him in his great and irreparable loss. They found him cheerful as ever. When they expressed surprise, he said — "I thank God that one eye still remains. I can see with it as well as I did when I had two eyes. The accident could easily have robbed me of both my eyes, but God chose to protect one of them. Blessed be His Name!" The accident, which would have plunged another man into depths of darkness, did not seem to touch him.

One of the most moving stories which Beloved Dadaji has told us is that of Bahram. He was a wealthy merchant. His caravans carried for sale in foreign Lands goods worth lakhs of rupees, every year. One day, his caravans were looted by robbers. Bahram lost several lakhs.

One of his friends came to sympathise with him in his great loss. It was a time of famine. And Bahram thought his friend had come in the hope of getting a meal. Bahram asked his servant to serve meals. But the friend said — "I am not in need of a meal. I only came to sympathise with you in your loss."

And Bahram said — "It is kind of you to have come. But I am not worrying over what has happened. I feel grateful to God that though the robbers looted my goods, I have lotted none! The robbers have robbed a portion of my perishable wealth but they have not touched the Treasure Imperishable,— the Treasure of faith in Allah, the Compassionate. It is the true Treasure of Life!"

[5]

Everything we have really belongs to God. It is ours so long as He chooses to keep it with us. The wealth of the world, its possessions and power, are a loan to us from God. If He takes back anything, who can blame Him? What reason have we to grumble or to complain?

A Rabbi loved his two sons more than life. Every evening, as he returned from work, he would meet them, embrace them, seat them by his side and then eat his evening meal.

One evening, he returns home, calls out his children by name and receives no answering response. He calls them again, there is no answer. He feels restless. His wife asks him to take his food, as it is getting cold. Reluctantly, he sits to his meals.

HIS wife asks — "Tell me, husband! if some one left two precious pearls in my custody and after several years came back to claim them, would I be right in refusing to return them?"

"What a question!" The Rabbi exclaims "Go, wife! and restore to the owner the two pearls, without delay!"

After the Rabbi has finished his meals, his wife takes him to an inner apartment. There lie the dead bodies of their two sons covered in a white sheet. The Rabbi is disconsolate with grief; he bursts into a fit of weeping.

"Why do you grieve?" says his wife to the Rabbi. "Did you not say a little while ago that what belongs to another must be restored to him without delay? Our two sons were precious pearls given us by God. He gave. He hath taken. Blessed be His Name!"

"Yes," repeated the Rabbi, "He gave. He hath taken. Blessed be His Name!"

All that we have belongs to God. He is the *Kul Malik*, the absolute Owner of all that is. If He chooses to take back anything,—or all that we have,—He has but taken what belongs to Him. What reason is there for grief or sorrow? He is the Compassionate One. If there is a thing He takes away, He gives us something better in return. His "taking" and "giving" have always our good in view. When this insight comes to us, we pray out of the depths of our hearts the prayer of Jesus,—which is, also the prayer of the saints and the *satpurukhas* of humanity — "Thy will be done!"

When troubles come to man,—and he accepts them as gift of God,—he is not alone. God is with him, and he feels happy. Significant is the prayer of a disciple of Christ

Lord! grant me
That I may be in trouble at all times!
When I am in trouble thou art beside me.
And so, if troubles leave me not for a single moment,
I shall have Thee with me at all times!

What really matters is that we have Him at all times Without Him the best boons of life are bitter as gall With Him the deadliest poison is sweet as *amrita* (nectar) This realised Mira And when the Rana sent her poison, she beheld in it the beauteous Face of her Beloved,—Sri Krishna,—and readily drank it in It became sweet as *amrita* And Mira felt stronger, pure, more radiant, after drinking the poison

God is our greatest need God is our one and only need True it is, as St Augustine says, the man "who is not satisfied with God is very avaricious and wise" And again.—

Lord!
If Thou turnest us away from Thee
Give us another Thee,
For we want nothing but Thee!

One mark of the man who wants nothing but God as this he is not afraid of trials and tribulations To him trials are a proof of the love of God Whom God loves, He chastises "God slays His loved ones!" sings Shah Latif,—the best beloved poet of Sind God tries and tests His chosen ones as gold is tested in the crucible

There is a beautiful incident in the life of St Anthony He has renounced the world for the love of God and is staying in a desert Far from the madding crowds of men, he lives a life of communion with God He has nothing to do with the world and its allurements Yet even he is not

free from trials One day, he undergoes intense suffering After he emerges from his trials, he says to God — "Ah! Beloved God! where were Thou when I was in great distress?" And he hears the Voice of God say — "My child! I was with you all the time, even as I am with you now! But I wanted to see how brave you were!"

Brave, heroic men,—is what God wants Well sang a saint of Gujrat —

*Only a hero may tread this Path!
Only he who hath offered
His life and his all
May take the Name of the Lord!*

He who accepts suffering and sorrow as sacraments — he learns to offer his life and his all as a sacrifice unto the Eternal He is a true hero For him is the way of Lord And as he treads the way, he finds that life's difficulties and dangers do not arrest his progress they but spure him on! He learns to summon new forces, new powers into action He walks the way of victory The sunlight of God's presence is on the path he treads He moves on, unafraid He crosses dangerous territory with no fear in his heart The Grace of God is with him and that is all he needs Nothing can conquer him He conquers everything, in the love and strength of God God is his unfailing Friend and there can be no failure with Him!

"TEACH ME TO PRAY!"

(1)

As a child I went up to him and said — "Teach me to pray!"

He smiled and answered — "If you would learn to pray, go and *pray*!"

Simple words these, but how true! He who would learn to pray, must go and pray There is no other way

I asked him again — "Which is the best time for prayer? And the best place?"

He answered — "The best time for prayer is now, and the best place for prayer is *here*!"

It is commonly supposed that the best time for prayer is either the silent hour of the dawn or the sacred hour of evening twilight, and that the best place for prayer is some quiet nook or some silence-spot on a river-bank, in a forest grove, on a mountain-peak But there can be no better time for prayer than *now* and no place better than wherever we happen to be. To grow in the spirit of prayer, we must realise that the circumstances in which we are placed are the very best for us at any given time

How often do we not put off the sacred duty of prayer in the hope that better times will come, giving us leisure for quiet communion with God! Alas! we keep on putting

off till the last moment

There was a sister in whose heart was genuine aspiration to God. She did not realise that the sands of time were flowing fast. She met me, one day, several years ago, saying — "How I long to come to the *satsang* (prayer meeting) every evening! But I am tied up! I have a grown-up daughter. I am anxious to have her married. As soon as I am free from this obligation, I shall not fail to come to the *satsang*."

Months passed by. She met me again. Her face was wreathed in smiles. "My daughter has been betrothed." She said jubilantly. "Her marriage is to take place next week. It will not be long before I come to the *satsang* regularly."

Several months passed by. When she met me again, she said with a look of sadness on her face — "What am I to do? The marriage passed off well, by God's grace, but one thing or the other has been keeping me at home. And now my married daughter is with me. She is in the family way. As soon as she is delivered, I shall feel free to come to the *satsang*."

I smiled and said to her - "Mother! You will never feel free, until you make yourself free!"

"You don't understand the difficulties of a householder's life," she said.

"There is only one difficulty, mother!" I said. "Overcome that and all other obstacles will vanish."

"What is that difficulty?" she asked.

"It is the assumption that we have still a very, very long time to live on earth. But who knows? Not a moment passes but a human soul sets out upon the inevitable

journey When will my turn come? When will your turn come? Who can say?"

"You don't understand my difficulty," she repeated
"You *cannot* understand it!"

In due course, her daughter was delivered of a baby-boy and still many months passed She did not come to the *satsang*

She never came One day, as I crossed a busy thoroughfare, I found a crowd of people and, in their midst, lying on the ground, was the mutilated corpse of a woman, knocked down and crushed to death by a military truck It was her body As I offered a silent prayer for her, I breathed out the aspiration — "She left without a warning, without a notice So bless me, Lord! that I may wake up before it is too late May I pray while it is day, for soon the night cometh when no man may pray!"

[2]

As a college student, I was a member of a small group called the "Prayer Circle" We met together, every evening, and studied one or the other treatise on prayer by some leading authority on the subject It was a highly interesting study I learnt so much about "types" and "levels" and "degrees" of prayer, about "low" and "middle" and "high" prayer, about the difference between prayer and meditation and contemplation, and about many other things I became almost an "authority" myself on the theory of prayer But to my deep consternation, I found that whereas prior to my studies in prayer, I could pray so easily, so naturally, so spontaneously, I could no longer do so, in spite of my extensive knowledge of the theory of prayer

I left off going to the "Prayer Circle" It took me long

to unlearn what I had learnt, and to get back to my original state of simplicity, when I could in prayer speak to God as a child to its mother

To be able to pray, you need not know,— I would even say, you should not know,— the theory of prayer I know of several who have read and mastered difficult books on prayer,— some of whom, indeed, have written books and lectured on prayer,— but who, alas! do not know how to pray

We were in Banaras when a learned Pandit came to meet Beloved Dadaji. Agony was writ on the Pandit's face. It was apparent he was passing through a crisis in his life. He had contributed several articles and delivered many sermons on prayer. When I said to him — "Panditji! why do you not pray to God to lead you out of your restlessness into the peace that passeth understanding?" he answered — "Alas! this is one of the things I cannot do. I cannot open out my heart in prayer to God! I do not know how to do it!"

You don't have to be learned or highly educated to be able to pray. Indeed, too much learning or education, far from being a help, becomes a hinderance in the way of prayer. Sri Ramakrishna was illiterate. He could not sign his name. Yet he prayed for hours together. He prayed as one who stood in the presence of God, speaking to Him as a child to its Mother. "Have you seen God?" he was asked. And he answered — "Yes, more clearly than I see you!"

Education is not needed. Knowledge of books is not needed. Wealth is not needed. A separate prayer room is not needed. Physical strength is not needed. What is needed is a loving heart eager to wait upon God.

Prayer is waiting upon God,— in love and longing Without this, repetition of set prayers becomes vain So often, prayers are read from books they do good in so far as they draw attention to God Mere mechanical repetition is waste of time

The prayers of most of us are entreaties before God, imploring upon Him to do something for us or to give us something of which we think we are in need Of Sri Ramakrishna, it is said, that even he, on one occasion, prayed thus — "Mother! give me a rich man!" He was so child-like! And for a child it is something so natural to turn to his Mother for the fulfilment of all his needs Better it is to stand with suppliant hands before God than to stand as beggars at the portals of the rich and the powerful

A *sanyasin* (man of renunciation) was in need of some help for an orphanage he was running He came to see the King of the realm and was told the King was in his prayer-room, offering worship to God Quietly, the *sanyasin* came and stood outside the door of the prayer-room The King was praying thus — "So bless me, Lord! that my years on earth may multiply, my wealth may increase, the borders of my realm may widen evermore "

The *sanyasin* listened and turned back. When they asked him — "O holy man! why are you going away without receiving any help?" he answered — "I did not know I was coming to beg from one who himself is a beggar! From today I shall beg of Him at whose door kings stand as beggars!"

It is well to place all our needs before God,— but only in the elementary stage As we grow in the spirit of prayer, we realise that our deepest need is not material things—the "goods" which the earth gives and the earth takes away,— but the Good of all "goods", God Himself Then

we learn to pray the prayer of the Sufi saint, Ansari of Hirat —

Beloved!

I ask of Thee

More than kings may ask!

Each one asks for something he needs

I have need alone of Thee, Beloved!

And I ask Thee to give me Thyself

[3]

Of Meister Eckhart,— the great mystic and lover of God whose teachings are so akin to those of the *Gita* and the *Upanishads* that he may well be regarded as an India *rishi* wearing a German body,— the question was asked — “Master! what is the mark of a truly good man,— a man of God? How may we recognise him?”

Meister Eckhart answered — “The good man,— the good man of God,— is not revealed by fasting or alms giving or self-chastisement but by his prayers. For prayer is the surest way to reach God and to speak to Him in close communion. The man of prayer is, to my mind, the best of men!”

The way of prayer is open to all,— alike to the poor and the rich, to the young and the old, to the illiterate and the educated, to the sick and the strong, to the sinner and the saint,— aye, to the deaf and dumb, the blind and the unbalanced. Whatever be your financial condition or mental equipment or spiritual state, nothing can stand in your way of prayer. You do not have to wait for favourable conditions to develop. You must make a start *now* and *here*.

Prayer is power. This power lies locked up within everyone. It must be unlocked by all who would tread the

pilgrim-path Prayer is the simple way, the direct way of approach to Reality, the *sahaj marga* of the saints In prayer, you need no initiation into mysteries you need to master no techniques All that is required is love of God and the yearning to behold His beauteous Face

Prayer is the great bulwark against worry How often do we not lay waste our powers in worrying over things which have happened to us or which may,— or as well may not,— happen in the coming days' Every worry means a strain on our nerves The more we worry the more tense our nerves become, robbing us of our rest and peace of mind and heart We, then become easily agitated and excited we quarrel without cause and become a nuisance to our dear and near ones

Instead of worrying, let us learn to turn to God in prayer and place all our burdens at His Lotus-feet This will give us an immediate feeling of relaxation and rest, enabling us to tackle the problems and perplexities of life in a spirit of calm surrender The man of prayer wonders at the spectacle of men and women carrying heavy loads on weak shoulders, when they can so easily roll off the load at the feet of Him who alone is strong enough to bear all the burdens of all the worlds

There was a gardener who loved each tree, each plant, each little shrub in his garden so well that he would not cast away the dead leaves and the withered branches He stored them all in his garden Gradually, all the space in his small garden was taken up by the dead leaves and dry branches, and the beautiful garden wore the appearance of a desert Are we not,— so many of us,— like this gardener? We go on storing worries and anxieties, failures and frustrations, fears and disappointments, which had better been cast away and forgotten and the beautiful garden of our life is fast becoming a desert Instead of

carrying this heavy load, all we have to do is to turn to God and contact Him through prayer

Out of prayer floweth peace,— within and all around
The man of prayer is peace with everyone and in all circumstances for his heart is ever anchored to the One, the only One We,— whose minds are restless as storm-tossed boats,— never feel at home anywhere and with anybody Our way is the way of resistance We quarrel with men and conditions we find fault with them And we put forth supreme efforts to improve matters and change the hearts of men No change in others is needed what is needed is an inner transformation in ourselves This will come through contact with God

The man of prayer is at peace in all vicissitudes of life To him all work is sacred He does not distinguish between "superior" and "inferior" work He knows that what matters is not *where* you work but *how* you work, His work,— howsoever humdrum it be,— is an offering of love to the Lord Such a man may work in a noisy factory or on a quiet farm his inner peace is not disturbed He may pray in the silence of a temple or he may break stones on the noisy roadside his inner calm is not perturbed He has found his centre in God and is perfectly at ease in all circumstances and with all types of men He dwells for ever at the Lotus-feet of the Lord he carries God within him wherever he goes The love that is in his heart is reflected everywhere and in all and wherever he turns his eyes, he but beholds the one Face of Love,— the Face of the Beloved Only the man who so beholds the Face of God in all things and in all men attains to peace,— none else, none else.

(4) Within each one of us is a fountain of the flowing water of joy and peace In and through prayer we reach this fountain and, drinking its waters, slake our thirst and

are refreshed, renewed, revitalized Yet it has been noticed by many that prayer, instead of opening up the inner springs, becomes itself a source of strain

I have passed through a similar experience. Years ago, not feeling happy with the circumstances in which I was placed, I prayed for conditions to alter I prayed and prayed but, to my deep disappointment, found that things did not change by an iota I prayed harder and harder in the hope that by the sheer force of prayer I would be able to change outer conditions still there was no change Prayer became such a strain that I had a mind to give it up altogether Then, suddenly, as in a flash of lightning, the realisation came that it was not outer conditions which needed to be changed the change was to be brought about *within* me to be able to see things as they truly were

In truth, everything is as it should be everything is in order All is well and has been well and will always be well We have only to see it Perfection is not to be created through human efforts Perfection already is it is only to be seen

Why, then, is it that the world, as we see it, is full of wickedness and vice, sin and suffering, ugliness and evil, cruelty and crime? The reason is that our vision is blurred we see things in a topsy turvy state As I write these lines I look at the street below through a glass-pane The glass-pane is not perfectly smooth and men and motor-cars and trees and plants look so funny,—curved and crooked Actually, they are not curved and crooked they only appear to be so, because of the irregular surface of the glass-pane through which I look at them

Nothing is wrong with the world the wrong that I see is due to me defective sight I do not have to pray for the world to be changed I have to pray that I may be cured

of my defective sight to be able to see that all is and has always been well with the world

The wrong that we see outside us is within us Our consciousness is stuck up in lower Chakras (centres) — it is to be lifted up to higher *chakras* when it will expand and become one with the whole universe Then it is that our eyes of understanding will open and we shall see things as they actually are This is the primary purpose of prayer

In prayer, we surrender all our burdens and cares, and lift up our hearts to God in quiet communion In prayer, our restless minds are stilled in His Love In prayer contact is established with Him who is the Source of health and strength, of happiness and harmony, of beauty and wisdom, of joy and peace Through this contact untold blessings flow into us, and, through us, to all who come in contact with us And though we walk through dry deserts and up steep mountains, we shall neither falter nor faint

The secret of such a life is repeated and continued contact with the All-Blessed One, from whom flow life-currents which cleanse, heal, restore, refresh spirit, mind and body Blessed is he who makes God the centre of his life, turning to Him, again and again, as the one abiding presence Such a man spends much time in prayer and through prayer he works wonder, unseen even by his intimate friends Such a man does not seek *to do* things *he achieves them* And his prayer takes on different forms At times it is a look of longing or a word of love — "O Thou! O Thou!" At times it is an assurance of faith, an expression of confidence and courage Very rarely is it an act of supplication for the man of prayer lives in the faith that the Lord knoweth,— more even than we do,— the needs of His servants and will never tarry in providing them God's delays are never denials, and in everything He does

is a meaning of mercy

The man of prayer is a rich blessing to his family, his community, his town, his country,— to the whole world,— eye, to the entire universe He is a living, moving temple of the Lord God dwells in him and he dwells in the Lord the twain are one! All his limbs and powers,— his eyes and ears, his hands and feet, his mouth and tongue, his nose and nails,— are united with God Through his lips God speaks to us through his eyes He looks at us and through his hands He pours forth His benedictions upon us!

BE FEARLESS AND FREE!

(1)

I am thinking, today, of two men. The first is even he whose name has run round the globe as that of a devoted disciple of Christ,— one who shows in his daily life that Christ's "Sermon on the Mount" is not a mere vision of a Prophet but a profound reality. In practical life Kagawa's life is, verily, an "imitation of Christ." For Christ he lived on Christ he meditated to Christ he dedicated every little act of his altruistic life in Christ he moved and had his being

Many speak of this great, little man as the "Gandhi of Japan." I love to think of him as the Saint Francis of our century. Kagawa's child-like faith and simplicity, his love of poverty, his compassion for the forsaken and forlorn, his joy in the midst of suffering, and his courage in facing the difficulties and dangers of life remind me, again and again, of the Little Poor Man of Assisi.

In an age stamped with materialism, Kagawa dared to be a disciple of Christ,— loving, faithful, true! He bore witness to peace and poverty, simplicity and a life of utter abandon. To be poor, he said, is to be truly free. When he renounced his all and moved out of his home to live with the poor men as one like unto them, many of his friends called him a fool. Some even thought he had gone off his head. But he smiled and said — "For the love of my Master I am become a fool. But of this I do not boast, for I have

no other choice "

The other man I think of is a friend who recently had an attack of heart-disease. He is an ordinary man,— like me, like many of my readers, like so many of the millions who inhabit the Earth dragging a weary existence beneath the burden of anxiety and care. As he was being taken to a "Nursing Home" for treatment, he halted on the way at our place to receive blessings at Beloved Dadaji's Shrine. Anxiety was writ on his face. He was filled with forebodings of a dark future. "I fear going to the Hospital," he said, "I am afraid I shall not come out of it alive!"

Fear,— is the one mark which characterises us, children of a sceptical age. We are afraid of the future, afraid of poverty, afraid of unemployment, afraid of dishonour and disgrace, afraid of disease, and death,— afraid even of life! We live in constant fear of losing what little we have. I know of a woman who has a small metal box with a little gold in it. She stayed as our guest for some weeks. She spent sleepless nights, getting up again and again to see if her gold was safe. She was afraid lest someone pilfered her gold under cover of the night. We live in fear, we work in fear, we walk in fear, we talk in fear. We move through life from one fear to another, crushed beneath the weight of a woeful existence.

There are some, however, who, even in this fear-dominated age, bear witness to the ideal of fearlessness. One of them was Kagawa. He lay in a hospital threatened with total blindness. He spent many months in a dark room with thick bandages covering his eyes. When they said to him — "Your health is gone, your sight is gone. Are you not afraid of approaching death?" he calmly answered that there was nothing he feared in this wide, wonderful, God-filled world.

"As I lie in this dark room", he said, "God still gives

light Pains that pierce the very fires of Hell itself sweep over me Yet, even in the melting fires of Hell, God's mercy, for which all of earth's manifold treasures would be an utterly inadequate exchange, still enfolds me "

"To me all things are vocal," he continued "Oh, wonder words of love! the bedding, the tears, the spittle, the perspiration, the vapour of the compress on my eyes, the ceiling, the matted floor, the voice of the chirping sparrow without, all are vocal God and every inanimate thing speak to me Thus even in the dark I feel no sense of loneliness "

"You suffer so much," they said to him "And you cannot see Don't you find it inconvenient?"

"Yes," he answered, "but it is inconvenient for people not to have wings, isn't it? If, however, they invent airplanes, these take the place of wings The same is true regarding external eyes If they go blind, it is simply a matter of inventing internal sight My God is light itself Even though every outward thing is shrouded in darkness, in the inner chamber of my soul, God's Eternal light shines on!"

Kagawa believes that the sufferings that come to us are part of the Divine plan which is working in and through our lives The All-loving and All-wise Architect of the universe means no harm to anyone Every arrow of pain has a purpose behind it Every experience of misery and agony comes to teach us a lesson we need to learn But this becomes clear to him who joyfully accepts everything that comes to him, attempting to avoid nothing

Joyful acceptance of God's Will,- is what leads to holiness and harmony. The way that leads to the Lord may be paved with suffering and sorrow but the pilgrim, who accepts all experiences of the life in the true spirit, is

released from the clutches of sin and earth-desire. Such a one finds no burden oppressive, no suffering irksome.

We do not have to wait for some great crisis to occur in our life to see if we have learnt to walk the way of acceptance. We must joyfully welcome God's Will in all the interruptions and irritations with which our daily lives are full. In every simple task, in every difficulty that knocks at our door, in every trial that comes to us unasked, let us see the working of the Will Divine. Let us accept all, giving thanks to God for every little happening, knowing that there is a meaning of mercy in all that occurs. So may we be enriched in purity and perfection.

When Kagawa was threatened with blindness, many felt puzzled. Kagawa has surrendered his life to God, they said. Why does God not take care of him? Why does God let the light go out from his eyes? They could not understand, as we do not understand when we see a man of God suffer.

To them Kagawa said — "In the darkness I meet God face to face. Here lies the reason for this long blindness. This is the purpose back of this wearisome confinement. I am being born,— born of God. God has some great expectation regarding me."

The expectation was more than fulfilled. Kagawa came out of the hospital and, through him, God's message travelled to millions of mankind. He became a channel of healing to many, leading them out of poverty into plenty, out of unrest into rest, out of sorrow into joy, out of weakness into spiritual strength, out of darkness into light. Through him new life was poured into innumerable "dead souls."

When Kagawa lay ill in the hospital, friends visited

fell into the mouth of the crocodile. I did not fall into the mouth of sin!" The dervish was a man of faith

The man of faith knows that God is the controller of his destiny and the destinies of all individuals and nations,— indeed, of the entire cosmos. The life of every single individual is a small but a very essential part of life on Earth and life on Earth is a small but a very essential part of the life of the universe. All that happens anywhere in the universe is controlled by God. And God is good and loving and wise. So the man of faith moves through life without fear or worry or anxiety. Knowing that whatever happens is for the best, he resists nothing. He expects nothing and rejoices in all that happens to him. He is never on the defensive, he never feels isolated or alone. Life to him becomes friendly. He trusts everyone, everything. This is what keeps him fearless in a fear-ridden world.

Fear is a poison that quickly circulates through the entire system, paralysing the will, producing a queer sensation in some part or the other of the human body. Fear is a great foe of man. Overcome fear the moment it appears or it will overpower you. And fear is a merciless master. Strike fear with the weapon of the spirit,— the word of God. Utter the sacred Name dear to you, the Name of the Beloved — Krishna, Shama, Jesus, Buddha, Nanak. Utter it, again and again. Utter it in child-like faith, and He whom you call will rush to your aid. Say aloud some prayer which has an appeal to your heart. Not unoften I repeat the prayer from one of Beloved Dadaji's songs —

बडो तुंहिजो पाणी
मुंहिजो बेडी निमाणी
अथम् सिदिकु साई
तूं रिखिपालु आहीं

*Thy sea is vast, my skiff is small.
I trust in Thee who guardest all!*

The spoken word has power to fight temptation and fear Recite some poem which may sustain you in the hour of need Many have received strength and solace from that immortal poem, "Abide with me!"

*Abide with me! fast falls the eventide,
The darkness deepens Lord, with me abide!
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me!*

Again —

*I need Thy presence every passing hour
What but Thy grace can foil the Tempter's power?
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me!*

And again —

*I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless,
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? where, grave thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me!*

Some of Ella Wheeler Wilcox's poems are very helpful in this connection I have sung the following lines to myself again and again —

*I will not doubt though all my ships at sea
Come drifting home with broken masts and sails,
I shall believe the Hand which never fails
From seeking evil worketh good for me
And though I weep because those sails are battered
Still will I cry, while my best hopes lie
Shattered, "I trust in Thee"*

* Recite these or other lines which may appeal to you.

him and, if only to comfort him they said to him:— "With so many things waiting to be done, don't you find this long illness tedious?"

Listen to Kagawa's answer— "I realise that a lot of work is waiting," he said "But work is not the purpose of my life " I am given life that I may live It is impossible for me to stupidly moon away this present precious moment in boredom by idly thinking of to-morrow My life is focused in this one moment My present task is here and now to fellowship with God on this bed of pain "

"I am not thinking of tomorrow or the next day," Kagawa added, "or even of this day's sunset hour I am concerned only with being, this present moment, with out any sense of tedium, with God And for me constantly praising God for the joy of the moments lived with Him there is no such thing as tediousness "

This is the secret of the truly fearless man He is not anxious about the morrow The morrow, he feels sure, will take care of itself He knows that, in this world of transitoriness, only the present moment belongs to him The moment just over is no longer his the moment to come may not belong to him at all And the present moment is best utilised not in worrying over what may have happened or what is yet to happen, but in praising God for the joy of living with Him

There was a time when Kagawa served T B patients and himself caught tuberculosis Doctors examined him and felt frightened "You will surely die in a year," they said to him He was serenely indifferent Turning to the Christ in his heart he said — "Lord! I shall spend each day in Thy service"

Each day that Kagawa lived was spent in the service of

the Lord Days rolled was spent in the service of the Lord Days rolled into months and months into years Kagawa lived on, communing with his Master who dwells in the midst of the poor and lonely "Doctors gave me up years ago," he said "It is faith in God that has kept me going I am amazed at the strength that comes to me when I pray and trust God "

[2]

Fear is a child of unfaith He who lives in fear does not truly believe in God , howsoever much he may have the name of God on his lips The man who believes in God is released from the bondage of fear and ego-centredness The worst may happen to him he is unafraid Misfortune may follow him as a faithful dog he is unafraid Poverty and pestilence may stare him in the face he is unafraid Imprisoned in a dark cell, taken to the gallows, thrown into the midst of ferocious beasts, he is still fearless, brave, unafraid For he has given himself over to an All loving and All- wise God No longer does he belong to himself he belongs to God It is God's sole responsibility to look after him, to guard him against all pitfalls, to provide for him There can be nothing better than what God wills for him So, in every situation and circumstance of life, he gives praise to and glorifies the Lord and utters the one word of gratitude, "*Shukur! Shukur!*"

Of a Sufi dervish it is said that, one day, as he took bath in a river, he was bitten in the foot by a crocodile Blood flowed from the heel of his foot He swam to the river-bank and there he sat uttering words of praise - "*Shukur! Shukur!*" A man who was near was amazed at the behaviour of the man of God To him he said - "How is it that even though bitten by a crocodile, you still say, *Shukur?* What have you to feel grateful for?" And the dervish calmly answered — "I feel grateful to God that I

fell into the mouth of the crocodile: I did not fall into the mouth of sin!" The dervish was a man of faith.

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*Thy sea is vast, my skiff is small.
I trust in Thee who guardest all!*

The spoken word has power to fight temptation and fear Recite some poem which may sustain you in the hour of need Many have received strength and solace from that immortal poem, "Abide with me!"

*Abide with me! fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens Lord, with me abide!
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me!*

Again —

*I need Thy presence every passing hour
What but Thy grace can foil the Tempter's power?
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me!*

And again —

*I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless,
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness
Where is death's sting? where, grave thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me!*

Some of Ella Wheeler Wilcox's poems are very helpful in this connection I have sung the following lines to myself again and again —

*I will not doubt though all my ships at sea
Come drifting home with broken masts and sails,
I shall believe the Hand which never fails
From seeking evil worketh good for me
And though I weep because those sails are battered
Still will I cry, while my best hopes lie
Shattered, "I trust in Thee"*

• Recite these or other lines which may appeal to you

recite them again and again, until fear departs and you feel strong as steel

Is not fearlessness the first essential condition for spiritual growth? Sri Shankara Acharya, — one of the greatest teachers of all time,— urged that he who would walk the way must have *vajur hridaya*,— a heart's strong as a thunderbolt When Swami Vivekananda returned from his American tour and entered upon his work of regeneration in India The one message which he delivered, as he travelled from town to town, from village to village, in this ancient land of heroes and sages was — "Be fearless! Be bold!" Listen to his words — "Stand up, be bold, be strong! Strength is life, weakness is death Weakness is the one cause of suffering We become miserable because we are weak. We lie, steal, kill and commit other crimes, because we are weak We suffer, because we are weak We die, because we are weak Where there is nothing to weaken us, there is no death, no sorrow"

I recall a most moving incident in the life of Swami Vivekananda He is in America, speaking to large audiences on the wisdom of India's Rishis and Saints He urges that the way is not for weakling the way is for heroes, for those who would be fearless in the face of every calamity, even death

A few young men wish to put the Swami to the test They know of so many who are wonderful preachers but whose life, alas! does not bear witness to what they teach does Swami Vivekananda belong to the same class? They invite him to deliver a lecture Gladly he goes to their meeting He speaks to them of faith in God as the secret of the true life And the man of faith, he urges, is fearless in the face of difficulty and danger

Suddenly there is the sound of pistol-shots Bullets fly

past the Swami, just grazing his ears Pandemonium reigns in the hall Men rush out women shriek in fear and some of them drop down in transient unconsciousness In the midst of this confusion, there is one man who stands firm, immovable as a rock, fearless and bold He is Swami Vivekananda The bullet that is not meant for him cannot touch him, the bullet meant for him will seek him out even if he is protected by a thousand bodyguards

Soon the shots cease The Swami picks up the thread of his talk where he left it a long minute ago People return to the hall Women wake up from their fainting fits Things return to normal and it seems as though nothing untoward had taken place

When the lecture is over the young men meet Swami Vivekananda "Forgive us," they say to him "The shots were fired by us to see how fearless you were Your courage and your confidence put us to shame Verily, Swami! you are among the most fearless men on earth Pray forgive us!"

[3]

Why is it that the vast majority of us live perpetually in fear of something or the other? Perhaps, one reason is that we are lonely The deepest tragedy of the modern man is his loneliness In spite of an ever-increasing number of clubs and cinemas, museums and parks, hotels and restaurants, at heart we feel so lonely A distinguished visitor to America was taken to a big cinema house. Throngs of people stood in rows awaiting their turn to get a ticket Asked for his opinion, the distinguished visitor said — "The Americans must be very lonely at heart else there would not be such a rush at cinema houses!"

Yes,— if we will confess the truth to ourselves we will not deny that we feel lonely We lack the security of

protection We are like the child who, taken to a fair, lost its mother in the crowd With this difference that the child rent the air with its cries for the mother, "Ma! Ma!" but we have forgotten even to cry for Her We are like the orphan who was never tired of complaining that there was no one to care for him in this big, boisterous world It is this sense of loneliness that leads to a feeling of frustration and so many of us do not find it worth while to live in the world Not long ago, a multi-millionaire brought an end to his life after leaving a brief note on his writing-table — "I feel lonely I can live no longer I kill myself"

Life is become a burden to untold millions Only a few commit suicide The rest die what are regarded as natural deaths but which are, in any case, too premature So many feel lonely and loneliness sits as a heavy burden on the heart, sapping its strength, eating into its vitals Heart-diseases are on the increase Hypertension is become a common ailment Nervous breakdowns take a heavy toll A heart-specialist said to me only last evening — "Not a day passes but I am called to the bedside of a dying heart-patient It was not so a few years ago"

We feel lonely we feel lost we feel abandoned we feel forsaken and forlorn Again and again, we lose the sense of security which belongs to us as children of God we fall into the abyss of fear

I can never forget the sweet, serene face of a child I saw over thirty years ago I was on board the S S Versova, travelling from Bombay to Karachi Suddenly, a terrible storm arose Thick clouds appeared in the skies, covering the face of the sun, and the day became dark as night Huge waves lashed against the steamer which tossed as a paper-boat All the passengers were filled with terror It looked as though we were doomed to a watery grave In the midst of this sorrowful scene sat a little child,— barely

six years old,— calm, serene, undisturbed by the shrieking storm and the rolling wave

I was, then, about ten years of age and I marvelled at this child's unruffled serenity in the face of death I said to him - "The steamer is about to sink. are you not afraid?"

With a cherubic smile he answered — "What have I to fear when my mother is so near?"

I can never forget these words When in the depths of despair and sorrow I have repeated these words to myself, repeated them again and again, I have felt relieved — "What have I to fear when my Mother is so near?"

Our mother,— the Mother Divine,— is so near to each one of us Closer is She than breathing and nearer than hands and feet Alas! we have turned our faces away from Her In our shouts and shows, our engagements and occupations, our business and commerce we have forgotten Her We have lost the child-like spirit To be child-like is to renounce criticism, is to rejoice in life, is to share all we have with all men, is to love and laugh We think we have grown up and no longer need the Mother's loving care We need to become children again, friendly and loving towards all,— not critical, not fearful We need to contact the Mother This is done through meditation and prayer and constant repetition of the Mother's Name Writing the Name, again and again, is a great help To start with it may appear laborious, but as concentration develops, writing the Name becomes a source of indescribable joy And as you keep on writing the Name, again and again, one blessed day you lose yourself you find the Mother! This is all that matters

It must not be forgotten that it is impossible for me to find the Mother through my own efforts and endeavours It is only through the Mother's grace that She is found On

our part we must make an attempt to radiate thoughts of love, to speak words of comfort, to live a life of service and sacrifice "You are not lonely O Arjuna!" says Sri Krishna to His beloved disciple in the Gita "I am with you, within you, all around you. Whatever you eat, whatever you give, whatever you do, do it unto Me!" So may our petty wills be blended with the Will Divine And in the measure in which our wills are blended with the Will of God, in that measure do we grow into the likeness of God Then we think as God would have us think we speak and act as God would have us speak and act. Then it is that fear vanishes from our life as mist before the morning sun And we move through life trusting every ray of the sun and every drop of rain, every rose and every thorn, every stone and every grain of sand, every river and every rock, trusting the sun and moon and stars, trusting thunder and storm, trusting every thing and everyone, giving the service of love to all

Significant are the words of Saint Francis — "Where there are compassion and wisdom there can be neither fear nor ignorance" The secret of fearlessness is sympathy, compassion, is love for all When love, unselfish love, enters into the heart, fear departs

Purna is a devoted disciple of the Buddha One day, as he sits in meditation, he gets an urge to go and spread the Master's message among the wild people of Sronapranta The plan appears preposterous to many of his fellow-*bhikkhus* But Purna is a man of faith he has no fear in his heart which is filled, through and through, with love and compassion for all who live in the darkness of ignorance

Purna comes to the Buddha for his blessings And the Buddha says to him "Purna! You know so well that the people of Sronapranta are wild and ferocious They insult and slander one another and are given to fits of anger If

they speak to you insultingly and abuse you and get angry with you, what will you do?"

"If they behave with me thus, Master!" says Purna, "I shall think them to be kind and friendly, since they do not beat or stone me"

"And what if they beat or stone you?"

"Even then I shall think them to be kind and friendly, since they do not attack me with weapons"

"And what," asks the Buddha, "if they attack you with weapons?"

"Then, too," answers Purna, "I shall think them to be kind and friendly, since they do not kill me"

"And what if they kill you, Purna?"

And Purna says — "Even if they kill me, Master! I shall still think them to be kind and friendly, since they will have liberated me from the limitations of the body"

The Buddha is well pleased in Purna To him the Blessed One says — "Purna, you are gifted with the greatest gentleness and patience You can go and dwell among the people of Sronaprantā Show to them the way to be free as you are free"

Blessed was Purna He was free he was fearless And he showed to many the way to be fearless and free It is not the way of lusting after pleasure or of accumulating possessions or of acquiring earthly power It is the way of knowing that we are very near and dear to God "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?" asked Jesus "And not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God Fear not ye are of more value than many sparrows" It is the way of giving gratitude to God for all that happens, of being glad in all circumstances and rejoicing forever, singing

the song— "The golden age is in my heart today." In the midst of poverty and privation, Saint Tukaram sang—

*No food have I nor shelter
A homeless wanderer I
Whom no child doth greet at eventide!
Yet there is none richer than I,
For I have all love and all joy
I have God His grace and His love
Fill me to overflowing!
Come poverty, come pain,
With God enthroned within my heart,
No ill can lay me low!*

*All things pass
As a dream they come,
As a dream they go!*

*I dwell in deathless joy,
And I have no fear
For I abide in Him,
And His immortal touch is on my soul!*

YOU ARE YOUR OWN PRISON!

[1]

Yesterday a dear friend met me. There were tears in his eyes. In a voice touched with sadness, he said to me — "The spiritual urge is growing within me from more to more. I feel I can no longer attend to the humdrum duties of an office assistant. Surrounded by files and meaningless papers, I feel unhappy, miserable. I want to resign my job and dedicate my life to the Guru and God!"

I quietly listened to the words of my friend whom I hold in esteem and I went and reflected over them in silence.

True it is, that at one time or the other, the words are wrung out of the hearts of the vast majority of men — "I feel unhappy, miserable!" The mind, which does not rest content until it has discovered a reason for every happening, a cause for every effect, examines outer conditions and places its finger on this circumstance or that as the cause of unhappiness. I am unhappy because I have to work in the secular atmosphere of an office. I am unhappy because of straitened financial circumstances. I am unhappy because of an incurable disease. I am unhappy because certain people spread false and malicious reports against me. I am unhappy because I cannot get the girl I love. I am unhappy because my children have fallen into evil ways. And so on. There is no end to reasons.

for unhappiness

Princes are unhappy peasants are unhappy unhappy is the whole world Unhappy, because we are moving on the superficeis of life Our lives are shallow. In our search for happiness we are busy chasing the shadow shapes of pleasures and possessions and power The more we run after the things of the earth, the more restless we grow, until the day comes when we can run no longer and we realise, too late, that we have wasted in vain the golden opportunities of our human birth Then we weep and cry with the Hindi poet

*When daylight shone
And the market was open,
I purchased no wares!
Alas for me!
The night hath come
The shops are closed
I remember the things I need!*

"Wake up! Wake up!" sings Kabir in a number of his most moving songs "This is the hour and this the moment! It is not yet too late!

To "wake up" is to know that the visible world has little or no value, the Unseen is the Real it alone counts The years that I have spent in pursuit of what the world gives and the world takes away are wasted in vain And the very first cry on waking up is the cry of King Soloman — "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity!"

A longing seizes my heart for something I cannot define A thirst springs within me for the love of Him whom the sages have called by many names, one of them being God I begin to see that without Him I am nothing "Man is insufficient without God, because without God he would not even be!"

The world, with all its goods and honours, cannot satisfy me and I begin to see that there is "an abyss of nothingness at the very heart of our being" My soul, aspiring to the Eternal, the Infinite, sings with a new meaning the song of the great Sindhi poet, Valiram:—

*Fellow-pilgrims on the path!
Why must ye wander still?
Come, comrades, come,
And drink the living waters
of Nama,—the Name Divine!
Drink! And in ecstasy see
How all things move
To the vanishing Point.
And only the One remains!*

To "wake up" is to realise the utter worthlessness of all that we are seeking. The surface life which keeps us absorbed is empty as a dream. There is a life in the depths. It is the life which you and I are meant to live. "Most of us live on the surface of ourselves," says a Christian saint. "Underneath is a fathomless sanctuary where Spirit and spirit can meet." There it is that the Beloved waits for us, and if we will but move on to meet Him, we shall receive the treasures of His Love. And His joy will be our joy, and His freedom will be our freedom and His peace will be our peace. Then, in the words of the great German mystic, John Tauler, "man is no longer troubled by anything. He is recollected, quiet, and really himself and becomes daily more detached spiritualised, and contemplative, for God is within him, reigning and working in the depths of his soul."

[2]

Among thousands of men scarcely one sets out in search of God,—says the Gita. Many of those who seek the Lord, alas! do not seek Him aright. I have heard a number of

my brothers exclaim—"How I wished I lived, far from the madding crowds of men, in the depths of a jungle or on the heights of a mountain peak!" They forget that it is not *where* they live that matters but *how* they live. It is not *where* they work. By this is not meant that all places and all works are alike. Surely, to meditate is better than to talk to people, and the sanctuary is a better place than the market. But wherever we are and whatever we do, let us maintain the same yearning towards God and an equanimity of mind which cannot be perturbed. This will enable us to live and move and have our being in God.

So many, however, believe that they will never be happy unless they are in a particular place or doing a particular type of work. And because their desires are not fulfilled they feel an inner restlessness and an urge to "escape" life which they misinterpret as spiritual awakening. Actually, it is not better than self-will. What I need to escape is myself, and no outer condition. When I think that this condition or that is a hindrance to my spiritual progress, I suffer from an illusion. What hinders me is myself, my attitude to men and matters. This, indeed, is the root cause of restlessness.

Spiritual life begins with forsaking oneself. "You are your own prison," says Pir Jamal. "Arise and quickly depart!" "The heart inquired of the soul, what is the beginning of this business?" asks the Sufi Saint, Ansari of Heart, and answers—"The beginning of it is the annihilation of self." And again—

*The way to the Beloved
Is the way of self-loss!
There is not other secret to be revealed,
And more than this is not known to me!*

The cause of my restlessness is myself. Wherever I go,—be it the highest heaven,—so long as I carry the self with

me, I shall continue to be restless I can run away from places and outer conditions but I cannot run away from myself Until I have learnt to free me from myself, I can have no real rest and peace of mind He who seeks peace in outer things and places seeks it in vain The more he seeks, the further recedes from the goal

What, then, should a man do? He must learn to abandon himself He must practise the one only renunciation,—renunciation of the self He who renounces himself renounces all things Then, like King Janaka, he can live the life of a free man even in the comforts and luxuries of a place Wonderful are the words of the great German mystic, Meister Eckhart — "If a man has renounced a kingdom, or the whole world, and retains himself, he has renounced nothing Indeed, if a man abandons himself, whatever he may then retain, whether it be wealth or honour, or whatever it may be, he has renounced all things"

True renunciation is not measured by the things a man gives up True renunciation is of the will and of desires A man may have ever so little of the goods and wealth of the world Yet, if he has desires, he is attached to the things of the world, He desires them he longs to possess them and, in that measure holds them as his own When, under God's grace, such a man learns the lesson of true renunciation,—which is inner renunciation,—he will have given up not merely the few things he actually possesses but all other things to which he clung in his desires The man who renounces his all,—be it ever so little,—renounces the whole world The renunciation of a poor man is no less than the renunciation of king

Francis, the youth, when he left his home to become a disciple of Christ, had only a pair of clothes on his body That was all he possessed And when his father challenged

him in the court, Francis gave up, for the love of God, his two garments and became naked. Francis renounced all he had: he renounced the whole world as though it were entirely his. Wealthy men, rich disciples of Saint Francis, sold all they had and distributed among the poor and followed in the footsteps of their Master. But the renunciation of Francis,—thought it meant the giving up of but a pair of clothes,—shines with a brilliance which centuries have not dimmed, for his renunciation was complete.

[3]

The life of self-abandon is the true life. In this you ask for nothing, desire nothing, claim nothing, but accept all situations and circumstances with a heart that rejoices in the Lord. It is a life of child-like trust in the All-Loving Mother. She provides all the needs of Her Children. In several cases she provides even before the need is felt.

"Which book would you recommend to me for study?" a dear brother asked me the other day. And I said to him — "The book meant for you will come to you!"

If only we could lay all our trust in God! If only we thought of Him as our only guide and followed His leading! What a glorious life ours would be! Freed from fever and fret, from worry and anxiety, from all the cares that crush a man down, it would truly be a life of divine companionship,—man living as a friend with God, talking to Him, hearing Him talk, loving Him, being loved by Him

Such a man abides in God. God's strength is his strength. He feels secure in His Loving Arms even as a child feels secure in the arms of its mother. Such a man has no burdens. Such a man has no fear. He knows that all is well. Again and again, he turns to God and smiles

a smile more beautiful than sunrise It is the smile of the soul that constantly gazes at the Beloved

Unencumbered and free, he walks his way, singing as he goes He does not ask for this or that to happen he does not even ask that he may become good or loving or kind or spiritual He asks for nothing he accepts everything One of the noblest prayers in the mystical literature of the world is that of a Sufi saint —

Lord !
I, a beggar,
Ask of Thee
More than a thousand kings
May ask!
Each one asks of Thee
Something he needs
I ask of Thee
To give me Thyself!

Not so the man of abandon He does not even ask the Lord to give him the gift of Himself He prays but one prayer— "Thy will be done!" This is the prayer of all prayers It surpasses all other prayers as the peak of the Himalayas surpasses all other mounts and hills

The man of self-abandon does not pray for this or that to happen The *mantram* of his life is expressed in the words which Arjuna utters in the concluding section of the Gita — "*Karishye vachanam tava*" "I shall act according to Thy word and Thy will"

Jesus desired to escape the bitter humiliation of death on the cross "Let this cup pass from me" he prayed, but immediately he added — "Let not my will but Thy will be done!"

In surrender to the Will Divine is the secret of that true

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In surrender to the Will Divine is the secret of that true

life which is rooted in God Then and only then is our separate existence, our individuality annihilated Then and only then are we identified with the work and the will of the Lord who has sent us here not without a divine purpose This is the true stripping of the soul This is the mystical meaning behind *vastrapaharana*,— Sri Krishna's stealing away the clothes of the *gopis* as they bathed in the sacred Jamuna river Not until we are stripped of all "clothing" may we live as God wishes us to live in His eternal life

SUFFER AND SMILE!

[1]

It was an early hour of the morning The first flutings of birds had died, and many of them, with wings outstretched, were flying in the skies Hundreds of little doves were lazily sitting on the terrace, cooing to each other, awaiting their morning meal In our small garden, flowers smiled and green leaves of shrubs and trees glistened in the first rays of the morning sun All nature appeared gay, beautiful as a bride on the wedding-day But my heart was sad

Beloved Dadaji (Sri T. L. Vaswani) lay ill, in great pain He had passed a restless night and though his eye-lids were heavy with sleep, the shooting pains all over his body would not let him sleep for over a minute or two at a time I had watched with him throughout the night and had seen how even when the pain was very acute, Dadaji continued to smile a smile more radiant than the star-lit skies of Sind. When the pain became unbearable, out of his parted lips came the one-word song — "*Shukur! Shukur!*" Gratitude to Thee, O Lord of Mery!"

Dadaji's feeble body was so broken with illness and pain that it was a wonder how he could bear it I, also, wondered that this prince amongst men, this man of singular purity and prayer, service and sacrifice, who would not hurt an ant and who gave the love of his gentle, generous heart to all,—the rich and the poor, the

young and the old, the sinner and the saint,—and who loved the birds and animals and every flower of the field and every lotus in the lake and every atom of matter and every ray of light,—I wondered that such a man should have to suffer so terribly.

Through Beloved Dadaji healing flowed to many who were sick and afflicted. Now, when he was in the throes of pain, nothing could be done to give him relief! The doctors were helpless. We, who were near him, could only wake and watch and shed hidden tears of sorrow. But all the while Beloved Dadaji rejoiced in his heart that by making him endure great agony of body, God was using him to give healing to others. I recalled how it was said of Jesus in the long ago —“He saved others. Himself He cannot save.” Such is the way of those who would be the saviours and servers, the helpers and healers of Humanity!

At about three O'clock in the night, finding it difficult to bear the sight of his suffering, I said to him — “Beloved! you are a friend of God. Why will you not pray to Him that He may heal you of this illness which your feeble body is unable to bear? Surely God will listen to your prayers!”

Beloved Dadaji smiled again as he answered — “To me, my child! there is nothing sweet than the Will of the Lord. And if it be His Will that I suffer, such suffering is sweeter to me than relief from pain. For, verily, in the fulfilment of His Holy Will is my real comfort and solace.” After a brief while, with uplifted eyes he prayed — “Gratitude to Thee, my God and my Lord! for this gift of pain. And if it be Thine Will to add to it tenfold, I pray Thee to do so without delay. In Thy Will alone is the peace I seek!”

I recalled how the great woman-mystic, Rabia, being urged by a friend to pray for relief from illness,

answered — "Do you not know who it is that wills this suffering for me? Is it not God who wills it? Why, then, do you bid me ask for what is contrary to His Will? It is not well to oppose one's Beloved "

[2]

With the first streaks of the dawn Dadaji's pain showed signs of abatement. When morning came, Beloved Dadaji met brothers and sisters, some of whom had travelled long distance to come and see him. One, who came from Bombay, on seeing Dadaji, exclaimed - "why do the dear ones of God suffer?"

And Dadaji answered — "It is only the body that suffers "

Some one asked — "Dadaji ! You have often spoken to us of the Law. And the Law, you say is just. But what is our experience? There is anything but justice in this world where the innocent ones suffer and the wicked ones flourish as a bay-tree. So many who live good, pure lives and remember God, again and again, do not get enough to eat. While many others who live a life of sensual enjoyment, go to the cinema house and the club, and drink and gamble and are forgetful of God have huge bank-balances. The devotees of God are afflicted with sorrow and sickness. The unbelieving ones are blessed with health and wealth and power and authority. Surely, such a sorry scheme of things cannot bear testimony to the operation of a Law which is either just or merciful "

For a brief moment Dadaji was silent. A smile played upon his lips and a radiance shone in his eyes. And he said —

"My child! What you say would be true if this earthly existence were the beginning and the ending of life. This

finite physical existence of which we are conscious is but one stage in the journey of life From eternity we come to eternity we go When our earth-pilgrimage is over, we shall continue else-where. And if we have grown in true knowledge, we may then understand a little of what appears to us today as enigmatic "

Then, pointing to the stump of a tree in the garden, Dadaji said —

"Beneath the strokes of a woodcutter's axe I saw that tree fall, several months ago What must have been the feelings of the tree as blow after cruel blow fell on it? Perhaps the tree knows better now Out of its wood have been fashioned doors and windows which protect many a poor man from the onslaught of rain and storm The tree may know today that the agony through which it passed was part of a plan

"Not long ago, I become very ill What pain, what agony the body had to suffer! Today, I know that blow after blow of suffering fell on me because the Master-Planner had planned to put me in the Sacrificial Fire

"What gives to the Saints their healing power? What makes the men of God redeemers of their race? This , that they receive the arrows of pain as gifts from the All-Giver! Alike in sunshine and in rain, they rejoice and give gratitude to God and sing His Holy Name Every great one of Humanity has had to bear his cross Krishna and Buddha and Jesus walked through the valey of the shadow of death Who are we to say — "We must escape sorrow, anguish, pain ?" We, too, must bear our cross,—bear and bleed

"And when we bleed , let us remember that the Will of God is working through us and through suffering and pain, God's Will is purifying us, preparing us for the

Vision of the One Lord of Life and Light and love in all that is around us, above us, below us, within us

"Suffering is the benediction which God pours upon His beloved children to whom He would reveal the meaning of His infinite mercy,—reveal Himself, His wisdom and His Love!"

And one said — "Yet, Dadaji! how natural it is for us, to try to get over sorrow!"

And Dadaji said —

"That is so, my child! because we still are creatures of flesh The flesh cries to get *over* sorrow but the soul cries to get *into* sorrow and at the heart of it greet her God!

"In the dark abyss is water found and the water of life may be found in the dark abyss of sorrow

"The light of the sun is dimmed by the passing clouds and when the clouds have moved on, the sun shines all the brighter So the pure man becomes all the more radiant after the clouds of sorrow have passed over him

And I said — "Dadaji! tell us more To hear you is to bathe in the purifying waters of the Ganges, is to be filled with new aspirations for the true life,— the life that is life, indeed "

And Dadaji said —

"I know not much I only know that there is suffering in the world And men and women wander in darkness In such a world let me go about giving love and compassion to all Let me serve the poor and broken ones, serve my brothers and sisters, serve birds and beasts and all creatures in whom is the breath of life Let me not

waste energy in questions or controverises Let me light a few candles at the altar of suffering creation

"If I meet a hungry man, let me not ask why he is hungry, when so many others feast at their banquet tables Let me give him food to eat

"If I meet a naked man, let me not ask why he shivers in the cold of wintry nights, when so many have their ward-robes filled to overflowing Let me give him garments to wear

"And if I meet a man lost in sin, let me not ask why he is lost, but with a look of compassion, with a song or a syllable of love, let me draw the sinner to the Spirit.

"Let me draw by awakening the longing that lies latent in all

"Let me lead some out of darkness into light"

THE PRACTISE OF MEDITATION

[1]

A friend met me the other day. He is a mechanical engineer holding a high position in a corporation which deals in imported machinery. He is rich in mind, in aspirations and in the purity of his character and in his heart is the longing to spend himself in the service of the great ideal.

In the course of his talk, he said to me — "You will be happy to know that I have made a special study of meditation under an expert. I know all about meditation." There was no doubt that he spoke in all sincerity.

After he left, I asked myself — "Is it possible to know *all* about meditation by studying the subject under an expert?"

To know meditation, we must *meditate*. Mere study will take us nowhere. What use is a bottle of medicine to a patient who will not drink its contents? And what use is a pair of spectacles to a man without sight?

To know what meditation is, we need to go within ourselves and unlock the powers that lie in the depths of our being. No one else can do it for us; we need to do it ourselves. We need to silence the clamour of our unruly mind. We need to cleanse our heart of all attachment, all

feelings of hatred and resentment We need to forget the outer world of alluring objects and sink deeper and deeper, until we touch the pure white Flame

Like all spiritual experience, meditation is something which cannot come to us from without It is true, in the early stages of our spiritual unfoldment, the "exterior" life, in a large measure, does shape the "interior" life What we think and feel, what we read and hear, what we do and speak, is echoed in the hours of silence So it is that I must take the greatest care of my "outer" life

The outer, empirical life should be a preparation for the inner life If I am to grow in the life which is life in itself, I must keep sentinel over my thoughts and feelings, my aspirations and desires, my words and deeds

To grow in the inner life,—the Life of the Spirit,—I need to withdraw from the outer world noise and excitement Each day, I must spend sometime,— at least an hour,—in silence It will be difficult, perhaps, to sit in silence, at the very start, for an hour at a stretch and it will be well if I practise silence for about a quarter of an hour four times a day

[2]

Sitting in silence, what do I find? I may have selected a silence corner in a garden or on a river-bank, far from the madding crowds of men and motorcars But, as I go and sit there, I find that I am overwhelmed by a new type of noise For noise is of two types — (1) exterior, and (2) interior It is easy to keep away from outer noise there are silence spots in every place, where the din and roar of cities do not reach But it is a difficult task to still the noise that is within,—the clamour of conflicting thoughts and desires

A beautiful story is told us of Guru Nanak,—the Great Master of the Silent Way. A *Mullah* (Muslim priest) meets him and says to him — “You speak of the oneness of all faiths. You urge that the Hindu and the Muslim are both dear to God, whose children are we all. Then come with me and offer worship to Allah in the orthodox Muslim way: come and do *namaz* with me!”

The Guru readily consents. And the two together go to a mosque and the priest (the *mullah*) shows to the prophet (the Guru) the way to pray! The *mullah* inserts his fingers into his ears and kneels down to pray; the *mullah* goes through the ritual. The Guru keeps standing.

Then says the *mullah* — “Why are you standing there like a log of wood? Why don’t you pray with me?”

The Guru smiles, then gently says — “My brother! if only you prayed, I, too, would pray with you! But, as your lips uttered the sacred words, your mind, alas! wandered to the stable where your mare is about to give birth to a foal. And you wondered about the colour of its skin! How you wished it were white as wool!”

So it is with many of us. We sit in silence with our lips we pray to God. But our minds, alas! stray to the stables of the world. Things and thoughts, to which we pay the least attention during waking hours, rise out of nowhere and, like swarms of mosquitoes, disturb our peace. The more we try to brush them aside, the more formidable they become.

What are we to do? Do *nothing!* Let us but sit still,— as silent spectators viewing the shifting scenes of a fickle mind. Let us but sit as, years ago, I sat in a theater watching a play. The actors appeared on the stage, played their respective roles, then disappeared. I kept looking on! So, too, let me keep looking on at the thoughts which rush

out of the unknown deep in a seemingly endless procession They are not my thoughts I have naught to do with them They come let them come They will soon pass out, leaving the chamber of my mind cleaner and brighter than before They are the dirt and filth which have accumulated within the cells of my mind during a life-time or, may be, during many long ages If the dirt and filth are washed off, I have every reason to rejoice The bad odour which is let out in the process should neither frighten me nor throw me into a slough of depression In due course, the mind will become calm and clear as the surface of a lake on a windless day Such a mind will become a source of indescribable joy and peace Significant are the words of the *Upanishad*—"The mind alone is the cause of man's bondage the mind is, also, an instrument of man's liberation "

[3]

To sit in silence, then, I must learn to be still,—to do nothing The more a man does, says an English mystic, "the more he is and exists And the more he is and exists, the less of God is and exists within him " To be still, I must learn the art of separating myself from the changing moods of the mind, from its flights which are faster by far than the fastest jet-plane.

One simple exercise will be found very helpful Let me imagine the mind in the form of a room In this room let me select a corner and sweep it clean Then let me sit in the corner and quietly watch the antics and acrobatics of the mind If only I can dissociate myself from them, I shall have thrown off the yoke of the mind I shall have broken the tyranny of the "ego" which is the only hurdle between me and my God: I shall have grown into the true awareness which, in the midst of my daily duties, keeps my heart fixed on the One Divine Reality

Yet another exercise will be found very helpful. As I sit in silence, let me offer my mind at the Lotus-feet of the Lord Every time I find the mind flying off at a tangent, let me quickly and gently bring it back to the Lotus-feet If for a whole hour I have done no more than bring the mind back to the Lotus-feet every time it has moved afar, I have not spent the hour in vain Gradually, the mind will get tranquillised and I shall taste and know how sweet it is to sit in silence

[4]

Sitting in silence, what am I to do? Repeat the Divine Name or meditate on some aspect of the Divine Reality or on an incident in the life of a man of God. Repeat the Name,—yes, but not merely with the tongue *Repeat It with the heart*. Repeat It in love and adoration Repeat It so that It gets engraved in letters of light on the tablet of your heart Repeat It until you can repeat it no longer, until you disappear from yourself, your ego is dissolved and you sit in the Presence of the Eternal Beloved.

Abu said was a writer of profane poetry his poems were very popular among the low-brows, in the Arabia of those days One day, an awakening comes to him and giving up the path of popularity, he sets out in quest of a Teacher who may show him the Way to Allah. This is what his Teacher says to him —"Abu Said' all the hundred and twenty-four thousand Prophets were sent to preach one word They bade the people say, "Allah," and devote themselves to Him Those who heard this word by the ear alone let It go by the other ear, but those who heard It with their souls imprinted It on their souls and repeated It until It penetrated their hearts and souls, and their whole beings became this Word They were made independent of the pronunciation of the Word, they were released from the sound of the letters Having understood the spiritual

over-work. And let me not be in a hurry to do anything
Let me go about my work quietly, gently and lovingly,—
my mind and heart devoted to the Lotus-feet of the Lord
Then will my soul become strong and all round me the
world will smile

3 In the midst of my work,—aye, even in the midst of
my *kirtan* and worship,—let me, again and again, withdraw
for a brief while into the inner chamber of my heart and
there speak to God, gaze upon His beauteous Face, touch
the hem of His garment, cling to His Lotus-feet, as it were
by stealth Let me do this from time to time throughout
the day and throughout the night Truly blessed are these
brief moments of intimate contact with God, when I
penetrate into the very depths of my soul and offer all I
have and all I am to Him and feel grateful to Him for His
everlasting mercy and loving tenderness

This may not be easy of accomplishment at the very
start But nothing is impossible to him who, in faith and
devotion, treads the way of *abhyasa*,—the Path of Practice
Does not the Lord declare in the Gita—

*Howsoever difficult or impossible it may seem,
You, O Arjuna! may still achieve it
By steadfast effort and whole-hearted devotion.
So walk the way of practice!*

And as the Chinese say — “The journey of a thousand
miles begins with one step ” We may be far, very far from
our goal but even if we have taken a single step in the
right direction, we have advanced on the Path And for
every single step that we take to reach Him, He takes a
hundred steps to draw nearer to us For, while we think
we are seeking Him, in reality, it is He who is in search
of us

SING,—OR BE SILENT!

[1]

There is a pretty, little story which was told us when we were small children. It is the story of a brave warrior who, mounted on a white steed, moved on from city to city, from hamlet to hamlet, offering his services free to all who needed them.

During the course of his travels, he arrives at a small village. He finds the people stricken in terror. The village is surrounded by a marsh covered with wild undergrowth. Hidden in the undergrowth live five dreadful storks with beaks stronger and sharper than swords of steel. Fierce and hideous are these five man-eating birds, and from time to time they come out of the fetid marsh and swoop upon the helpless villagers and carrying their little ones in their beaks swiftly fly away. The villagers have tried in vain to rid themselves of these predacious birds. They are too swift and strong to be killed by arrows. And the marsh will not allow traps to be laid for them, whoever walks over the marsh is trapped by it!

The fame of the brave warrior on the white horse has preceded him, and the village-folk rejoice to see him come. "O helper of the helpless ones!" they say to him, "long and weary has been our waiting. Do something for us!"

The brave warrior can think of no way to capture the birds, dead or alive. But he is so anxious to help the poor

village-folk He goes and sits underneath a large banyan-tree He sits in silence he sits in meditation He invokes the help of the Highest of the High Then it is that a plan suggests itself to him He calls the villagers He asks them to walk in procession to the danger zone he himself leads the procession And as they move on, the village-folk are asked to chant aloud the Name and glories of God

They arrive at the marsh There is no sign of the birds they are hidden in the bush The warrior has in his hands to cymbals as large as the wheels of a motor-car: they produce a harsh, piercing sound The villagers are asked to plug cotton into their ears lest the sound turn them deaf And with all his might the warrior clangs the cymbals,—clangs them, again and again and still again All the while the village-folk sign the Name of God at the top of as never had been heard in the village before

Confused by the monstrous noise, the ravenous birds come out of their hiding places, rise in the air and wildly flap their wings they screech in utter dismay Then, frightened out of their wits, they flee in frantic haste, never to return The village has been cleared of the birds of slaughter And in sheer joy the village-folk dance and sing—"Victory to the brave warrior on the white steed!" "Nay," he admonishes them, 'all victory is to God whose unprofitable servant I am'" And together they sing—"Victory to God! Victory to Most High!"

[2]

Thirty years and more have passed since I first heard this story it has stuck to my memory During these thirty years the story has visited me, again and again, as I sit in silence and wonder at the Mystery we call Life The inner significance of the story has grown upon me, as the years have passed And, oftentimes, I have felt that I and so

many of you, my indulgent readers, are the village-folk in the story Five birds,—seemingly invulnerable, invincible,—attack us again and again, mortally wounding us, stabbing us with their sword-like beaks, mangling and mutilating the life of the soul Who are they?

There will be space to write only a little concerning but one of these five birds of slaughter The very first of them, as it has seemed to me, is wild thinking and unrestrained speech The two go together If my thoughts are unbridled, my words will, time and again, get out of control So the very first lesson which every seeker on the Path must master is *restraint of speech through control of thought*

Did not Sri Ramakrishna say —"Make your mind and mouth one?" When I have achieved a sense of unity within me, then and only then will my words express my true inner feelings For this, silence is essential The seeker must learn, more and more, to sit in silence, to work in silence, to watch in silence, to think in silence, to aspire in silence, until silence unties the "knots of his heart" and he is liberated, free

If only we knew that we were imprisoned in prisons of our own making! No outside force fetters us It is what we *say* and *do* that forges the chains which bind us mercilessly to the wheel of sin and suffering If freedom is to be won, our entire life must undergo a change For most of us such a task is impossible of achievement through our own efforts,—unaided, alone We need the help and guidance of an evolved Soul, a Teacher, an Inspirer, a Friend of God No one else will help us No one else *can* help us There are many who will sympathise with us and even shed tears with us, but that will not give our distracted hearts the consolation they need All true consolation comes from within

"What may I do?" asked a disciple of his Master and the Master said — "*Undo what you have done!*"

We have set up wrong relations with people by thinking what we should not have thought about them, by saying what we should not have said about them. We have thought in terms of jealousy and hatred, of suspicion and scorn, of doubt and disdain. Let us start thinking the other way round! We have spoken words of disrespect and dishonor, of insult and abuse, of rage and outrage, of irreverence and affront, of mockery and ridicule. We have spoken words which have cut into the hearts of others, wounding them beyond repair. It is time we started upon the work of healing!

How often do we not enter into controversies when we had rather remain silent! All controversy is heat and heat is pride. Controversy puffs up the ego and so throws barriers in the way of self-realisation. Who is right? Who can say? Let but each one walk according to the light that is shown him. What is right for me may be wrong for another; what is right for him may be wrong for me. For though we all come from One and to Him must, one day, return, we all are so different from each other,—in equipment, in opportunities, in heredity, in traditional background. Let us only be true to the Truth as we see it. If I know what is right for me, let me strive to live by it. I can never know what is right for another; he will know it himself and will shape his life in accord with it. No fighting over words, for words never reach Reality. The world will not improve by argumentation and hot discussion, but by radiating thoughts of love and compassion.

And how often do we not gossip about others, when we should be minding our own business? How often do

we not, as Jesus said, see "the mote in another's eye," when we should be careful about "the beam in our own"? Our houses and our clubs, our hotels and our hostels,—aye, even our offices and workshops,—are becoming, ever-increasingly, centres of gossip "Gossip, it has been rightly remarked, is spiritual murder Many a promising life has been wrecked by gossip

There is an inviolable law which governs the universe from end to end —What you send out comes back to you! Do you gossip about others? You will be gossiped about! Do you send out thought of hatred and enmity to others? Hatred and enmity will come back to you, turning your life into a veritable hell! Do you send out loving thoughts to others? Do you pray for struggling souls? Do you serve those that are in need? Are you kind to the passers-by the pilgrims on the way who seek your hospitality? Then, remember, sure as the sun rises in the East, all these things will return to you, making your life beautiful and bright as a rose garden in the season of spring!

Has life been unkind to you? Do your brothers and sisters mistreat you at home? Do your friends forsake you and your co-workers pay little heed to your wishes? Do you get a cold reception wherever you go? Then, may I tell you, brother! What you should do is do not find fault with others But search yourself and see where *you* are at fault The treatment you receive from the outside world is only a reflection of what is going on within you He whose heart is a flowing fountain of love will be greeted with love wherever he goes He who is harmless will be harmed by none

[4]

There is a beautiful, touching story told us concerning the Buddha He has grown in years and in influence. He

is followed by devoted crowds wherever he goes. Thousands upon thousands,—many of them rich noblemen, who have renounced their riches and their life of comfort and ease,—have joined his Order and become wandering *bhikkhus*, cheerfully accepting the rigours of a homeless life.

Devadatta is a cousin and disciple of the Master. Infatuated with the lust for power, Devadatta wishes to set himself up as the leader of the Order. But this may not happen so long as the Buddha lives in his human body. Devadatta secretly plots to put an end to the Buddha's life. Nalagiri is a fierce wild elephant, belonging to King Ajitasatru. The elephant is always kept in chains, Devadatta arranges that when the Buddha passes by a particular road, Nalagiri will be let loose after him.

As is his custom, the Buddha, with several of the *Bhikkhus*, passes along the road early in the morning. Nalagiri is let loose. With quickening steps, the manslayer pursues the party of *bhikkhus*, going down the road. They are terrified: many of them run away to seek refuge in some safe spots. Alas! in the face of danger, they, like so many of us, forget their oft-repeated vow—"Buddham saranam gachhami!" "I seek refuge in the Buddha!"

Only a few remain with the Master. They, too, are terrified. But like true disciples, they consider their own life as of insignificant value compared to that of the Master. They plead with him to run to some place of safety. Calm is the face of the Buddha: serene are his eyes, lit up as ever with the light of compassion. And to his disciples he says—"fear not my brethren! He who harmeth none, will be harmed by no one!"

There is panic all along the road. People have climbed the roofs of houses on both the sides of the road. Death is

abroad The people feel intensely for the Buddha and the small number of *bhikkhus* who will not leave their beloved Master even in this moment of impending doom From roofs of houses the people look at the Buddha and exclaim — "What loveliness in his face! What light! What Beauty! Yet will the elephant not spare even the Blessed One!" And some there be who declare — "What harm can this animal elephant, Nalagiri, do to him who is an elephant among men?"

The atmosphere is tense with excitement The Buddha is calm And with love and compassion in his lotus-eyes, he looks at the steadily advancing elephant The elephant has now reached the Master An agonised cry goes forth from the house-tops — "May the Blessed One be safe from harm!"

Call it a miracle, if you will! It is not a miracle it is the magic of the Master's presence,—of one who will harm no one in thought, word or deed! The elephant bows down to the Master, then quietly gets up! The Master strokes his forehead and speaks to him a gentle word or two of love Nalagiri is become a new elephant,—tame and docile Throngs of people are already on the road which, only a couple of minutes ago, wore a deserted look And the people exclaim in joy — "Wild elephants are tamed with buffets and blows But the great elephant among men has tamed Nalagiri with a blessing and a smile!"

[5]

Such is the law He who harms none will be harmed by no one! This applies not to men only but, also, to birds and animals, to all creatures who have the breath of life In our daily life we may endeavour not to harm human beings but alas! our attitude towards birds and animals,—poor, helpless, defenceless creatures of God,—is one of

cruel indifference Else would we eschew meat-eating and wearing clothes which involve the murder of millions of little innocent insects,—the silk-worms Every shirt of silk, every silken *sari* is built in the death of a million creatures who have as much right to live as we have Little wonder that with all the comfort at our disposal, we feel so unhappy!

In the day I achieve complete harmlessness in thought, word and deed, I shall have been free from all problems That I still have problems is clear proof that I have not yet attained to the state of harmlessness Let me start right now upon the task of renouncing harmful thinking and harmful speech

What may I do? Let me first understand that in nine who have as much right to live as we have Little wonder that with all the comfort at our disposal, we feel so unhappy!

In the day I achieve complete harmlessness in thought, word and deed, I shall have been free from all problems That I still have problems is clear proof that I have not yet attained to the state of harmlessness Let me start right now upon the task of renouncing harmful thinking and harmful speech

What may I do? Let me first understand that in nine cases out of ten it were better for me to keep silent than to speak. Most of the words I speak are either useless or destructive in character So let me make it a practice to pause before I speak and consider if what I am about to say is better than silence I shall find that there will arise very few occasions on which it will be beneficial to break my silence

I shall gradually grow in the spirit of silence, and silence will teach me to sing,—the Name of the Beloved! As I

sing,—with word of mouth or in the depths of my aspiring heart,—the Name Divine, again and again and still again, my breath will be purified, my thoughts will be uplifted I shall grow in the spirit of true devotion which will transform my life, releasing me from the problems and perplexities, the doubts and despairs which make me wander, today, from pillar to post, from post to pillar It will unify me and bind my heart to the Eternal Beloved without whom there is no joy, no peace

The brave warrior in the story sang the Name of God and the birds of slaughter flew away never to return As I, too, sing the Name Divine, I shall be freed from the heavy chains which hold me fast to the wheel of suffering and woe I shall grow in the freedom which never comes until we have learnt to surrender all we have and all we are at the Lotus-Feet Then it is that we become new Our countenance changes, becomes radiant our eyes are lit up with a new, unearthly light and our words are charged with the fragrance of the Spirit

This it is to live the truly spiritual life It is the life of loving devotion to the Ideal. It is the life of mystical silence It is the life of dedication, of consecration, a life of silent sacrifice It is the life of utter self-surrender It is the true God-guided life in which the Lord doth guide us even as a loving mother doth protect and guide her little ones. Come suffering! Come pain! Nothing disturbs our interior peace We are guided by Him through sun and shine we are led on by Him from port to port until we reach the Other Shore

Fellow-pilgrims to the Beloved's shrine! what have we to do with words which have little meaning and value? Let us sing the Name of God! Let us sing it in the silence of our closed rooms and in the din and roar of bustling crowds! Let us sing it as we wake up in the dark of the

dawn and as we retire in the stillness of the night! Let us sing the Name as sang Sri Chaitanya, in the blessed streets of Nadia and Puri, filled with the ecstasy of love! Let us sing it as sang Guru Nanak in the Kartapur Colony, making it, verily, the City of Kartar, the City of the Creator, the City of God! Let us sing it as sang Sri Ramakrishna, in our days, revealing to countless men and women the beauty of God, the Mother!

*Sing the Name,
Ye pilgrims all
Bound for the Other Shore!
Sing the Name
As you ply your oars,
And the Boat will safely pass
Through raging storms of passion, pride,
O'er anger, envy's rising tide,—
And reach the Other Shore!*

*Sing the Name
And dance in joy!
Let the heavens resound
With the Holy Name!
Weep, brother, weep,
As you chant the Name!
And crossing the Sun
And crossing the Moon,
You'll reach the Other Shore!*

FRAGMENTS

THE KINGDOM OF KRISHNA

Here, in this three-dimensional world, we measure distances in terms of miles

In the kingdom of Krishna, the distance between me and the Beloved is an uncharitable thought, a rude word, a harsh criticism, an impure motive, an egostic impulse, a selfish act

GIVE! GIVE! GIVE!

God is the Great Giver, the giver of givers Would you follow Him? Then give all you have,—your time and talents and treasure, your peace and power and prayer, your rest and recreation, your love and sympathy,—to those in need

Give, give, give,—and God will take you and make you His instrument of help and healing in this world of suffering and pain

REJOICE!

Are your friends ungrateful? Do they reward your services with insult and abuse? Then, 'tis time to rejoice! For God Himself will reward you!

No one may draw wages from two,—from God and the world And if the wages of the world are approbation and applause, ease and comfort, power and authority, the

wages of God are purity and humility and peace that stands strong in the midst of insult and abuse, and joy that no man may steal from you

OUR ONE ONLY NEED

Rites are not needed Ceremonies are not needed The lore of sacred books is not needed, Wealth is not needed Torturing the body is not needed Science and art are not needed

What is needed is a pure, humble heart which hath surrendered to the Lord and which, with every beat, doth utter the Name of the Beloved

YOU ARE A CHILD OF GOD

You are a child of God Within you flows the Life of God!

Within every cell of your body this life is at work, healing you, renewing you, making you strong!

Evoke this Life through prayer and affirmation,—and all sicknesses will vanish as mist before the rising sun!

WHERE DWELLS GOD?

In all situations of life, keep calm The inner balance is essential to spiritual progress

Harmonious living is more important than doing deeds of service

If in the midst of your daily work, something happens to agitate your mind, even for a brief moment, stop immediately Withdraw into silence and try to regain the inner calm It is enough if through out the whole day you practise only this *sadhana*,—that of calling yourself back to serenity the moment you are in danger of losing it

God dwells in a house where there is harmony Every thought, every feeling, which does not vibrate love, clouds the Golden Face of Reality and take us away, far away from the Lotus-Feet of the Lord

ACCEPTANCE

Are you in search of the joy that hath no ending the peace that passeth understanding? Then learn to walk the way of acceptance

Accept everything that comes to you as having come from the Hand of God the Merciful, the Compassionate

Greet each new day as a messenger from the Beloved and accept all embarrassments and entanglements as "messages" from Him whose mercies ever endure

And in your heart repeat unceasingly the Name of the Lord, and rejoice that you are in the service of Him who saith—"Come unto Me and I shall give you rest!"

NEW LIFE

In life's "Diary" there is for each day a new leaf And on each page are written the words in letters of burnished gold—"Come unto Me! And I shall give thee complete forgiveness and new light and new strength to walk the way!

So, one may start living a new life any day Why not today? For who knows, what may happen tomorrow?

Let not the failures of the past, the sins and struggles of days gone by, be as a drag-weight around your neck "Come unto Me! And I shall forgive thee and I shall grant thee freedom without which there is no joy, no peace, no perfection!" It is Freedom from sin and from that which is the root of all sin,—desire

It is the glorious liberty of the children of God

HARM NONE!

He who harms none will be harmed by no one!

This law must be extended to birds and animals, to all creatures that have the breath of life.

In your daily life we may endeavour not to harm human beings. But alas! our attitude towards birds and animals,—poor, helpless, defenceless creatures of God,—is one of cruel indifference.

Else would we eschew meat-eating and wearing clothes which involve the killing of creatures who have as much right to live as we have.

Little wonder that with all the comfort at our disposal, we feel so unhappy!

He is a bhakta (devotee) of the Lord And if you ask him of the secret of happiness, he will reply in three simple words — "Contact with God!" He will advise you to inscribe on the tablet of your heart that "God is the All powerful One who holds in the palm of His Hands the master-key to all problems "

His life is moulded and modelled according to the gospel of the Gita He is in the world but he is not worldly With his eyes full of tenderness, he moves and mingles with men and soothes their sorrowful hearts when he tells them — "All is well, all was well, and all will be well"

He is attached to no one yet all creatures,—men and birds and animals,—are his friends All are his kith and kin He breathes out benedictions to all

In him is mirrored as perhaps in very few, the radiance and glory of the New Renaissance of holy Hindustan

His life reflects the light of love, sympathy and compassion Rightly did Sadhu Vaswani hail him when he greeted him on his 44th birthday,— "Compassion is the crowning aspiration of your life "

In his heart is the vision of a New Education,—an education that would lead humanity out of darkness into light, out of chaos into a new cosmos

He is a poet But as Wooland Kahler, Marquis de St Innocent wrote in his "Foreword" to Sri J P Vaswani's Tear Drop — "If soul-stirring poems,—"he puts his poetry in .